

THE
IRON CHEST;

A PLAY,

IN THREE ACTS;

By GEORGE COLMAN, THE YOUNGER.

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL, DRURY-LANE.

PRINTED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE MANAGERS
FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK.

WITH REMARKS

BY MRS. INCHBALD.



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REMARKS.

THIS play is remarkable upon many considerations—one of which is, that, notwithstanding its merit as a literary, as well as a dramatic production, it has never been very successful at the winter theatres. It is remarkable also for having once had a preface affixed to it, in ridicule of a man of genius—the very best object for an ambitious satirist. It is now as remarkable for having that preface omitted in all its editions.—But its highest claim to notice is derived from its fable and incidents having been founded on that extraordinary and well-known novel, called “Caleb Williams.”—This last circumstance has, perhaps, contributed less to its good than to its adverse fortune.

The novel of “Caleb Williams” has too forcibly struck the minds and hearts of its numerous readers, to admit, on that subject, of any deeper impressions; and to follow an author, in a work of such powerful effect, what hope could be cherished of arriving at the goal which he had reached, or of approaching him nearer than as one of his admiring train?

Yet when Mr. Colman takes characters from Sterne and Godwin, the latter never enervates, as the former, his pen;—he catches passions more dexterously than he imbibes sentiments; the stamina of

the stage, must never be diffuse : the play must be comprised in a certain number of pages ; and, when the foundation of a fable is of the magnitude of murder, any abridgment of circumstances, requisite to make description both clear and probable, must be of fatal import to all the scenes so founded. — British spectators of a tragedy, moreover, even wish to behold the assassin's dagger reeking before they listen to his groans of remorse ; — and the offence received is sometimes demanded in exhibition, ere they will sympathise in the thirst of vengeance.

Neither of these previous events, as displayed in the novel in question, was it in possibility to bring within the limits of a drama. — All that was possible has strictly been accomplished : — and, amongst the many poetic beauties interspersed, or sacred truths enforced, throughout this tragedy, its moral stands pre-eminent ; — either to warn the innocent, or to appal the guilty, in this one short simile : —

————— “ Oh, how will sin
 “ Engender sin ! throw guilt upon the soul,
 “ And, like a rock dashed on the troubled lake,
 “ 'Twill form its circles, round succeeding round,
 “ Each wider than — ” *

* See page 87.

THE
IRON CHEST.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.

The Inside of RAWBOLD'S Cottage.

Several CHILDREN, squalid and beggarly, discovered in different parts of the Room: some asleep. DAME RAWBOLD seated, leaning over the Embers of the Fire. BARBARA seated near her. SAMSON standing in the Front of the Stage. A narrow Staircase in the Back Scene. A Taper burning. The whole Scene exhibits Poverty and Wretchedness.

GLEE.

- Sam. *Five times, by the taper's light,
The hour-glass I have turned to night.*
- 1 Boy. *Where's father?*
- Sam. *He's gone out to roam:
If he have luck,
He'll bring a buck,
Upon his lusty shoulders, home.*

Sam. A mere nothing ;—while father and I (bate us but the mother and children) have the credit of purloining every single thing that you have the care of. We are up early, and down late, in the exercise of our industry.

Barb. I wish father and you would give up the calling.

Sam. No ;—there is one keen argument to prevent us.

Barb. What's that, brother ?

Sam. Hunger. Wouldst have us be rogues, and let our family starve ? Give up poaching and deer-stealing ! Oons ! dost think we have no conscience ? Yonder sits mother, poor soul !—old, helpless, and crazy.

Barb. Alas ! brother, 'tis heart-aching to look upon her. This very time three years she got her maim. It was a piteous tempest !

Sam. Aye, — 'twas rough weather.

Barb. I never pass the old oak, that was shiver'd that night in the storm, but I am ready to weep. It remembers me of the time when all our poor family went to ruin.

Sam. Pish !—no matter : the cottage was blown down ;—the barn fired ;—father undone :—Well, landlords are flinty-hearted ;—no help !—what then ? we live, don't we ? [Sullenly.

Barb. Troth, brother, very sadly. Father has grown desperate ; all is fallen to decay. We live by pilfering on the Forest ;—and our poor mother distracted, and unable to look to the house. The rafter, which fell in the storm, struck so heavy upon her brain, I fear me 'twill never again be settled.

Moth. Children ! Barbara ! where's my eldest daughter ? She is my darling.

Barb. I am here, mother.

Sam. Peace, fool ! you know she's doating.

Moth. Look to the cattle, Barbara ! We must

to market to-morrow. My husband's a rich man. We thrive! we thrive! Ha, ha, ha!—oh!

Barb. Oh brother! I cannot bear to see her thus;—though, alas! we have long been used to it. The little ones too,—scarce clothed—hungry—almost starving!—Indeed, we are a very wretched family.

Sam. Hark! Methought I heard a tread.—Hist! be wary. We must not open in haste, for fear of surprises.

[*A knock at the Cottage door.*]

DUET.

Sam. *Who knocks at this dead hour?*

Raw. *(without.)* *A friend.*

Sam. *How should we know,
A friend from foe?*

A signal you must give.

Raw. *(without.)* *Attend.*

[*RAWBOLD gives three knocks, which SAMSON counts, singing at intervals.*]

Sam. — *One, two, three!*

'Tis he.

Give me the word we fixed to night.

'Tis ROEBUCK (in a whisper to BARBARA).

Raw. *(without.)* *ROEBUCK.*

Sam. *That is right;*

Enter now by candle-light.

Raw. *Open now by candle-light.*

[*SAMSON opens the door.*]

Enter RAWBOLD.

Raw. Bar the door. So! softly.

Sam. What success, father?

Raw. Good: my limbs ache for't.

Moth. O brave husband! Welcome from the court. Thou shalt be made a knight; and I a lady. Ha! ha!

Raw. Rest, rest, poor soul! — How you stand!
(to SAMSON.) The chair, you gander.

Sam. (to BARBARA) Why how you stand! the chair, you gander.

[*They bring RAWBOLD a chair: he sits.*]

Raw. Here — taken my gun — 'tis unscrewed. The keepers are abroad; I had scarce time to get it in my pocket [He pulls the gun from a pocket under his coat, in three pieces, which SAMSON screws together, while they are talking.] Fie! 'tis sharp work! Barbara, you jade, come hither!

Sam. Barbara, you jade, come hither.

Raw. Who bid thee chide her, lout? Kiss thy old father, wench, kiss me, I say. — So; — why dost tremble? — I am rough as a tempest; evil fortune has blown my lowering nature into turbulence; but thou art a blossom that dost bend thy head so sweetly under my gusts of passion, 'tis pity they should ever harm thee.

Barb. Indeed, father, I am glad to see you safe return'd.

Raw. I believe thee. Take the keys; go to the locker, in the loft, and bring me a glass to recruit me.

[BARBARA goes out.]

Sam. Well, father, and so? —

Raw. Peace. — I ha' shot a buck.

Sam. O rare! Of all the sure aims, on the borders of the New Forest, here, give me old Gilbert Rawbold; though I, who am his son, say it, that should not say it. — Where have you stowed him, father?

Raw. Under the furze, behind the hovel. Come night again, we will draw him in, boy. I have been watch'd.

Sam. Watch'd! O, the pestilence! our trade will be spoil'd if the groom-keepers be after us. The law will persecute us, father.

Raw. Do'st know Mortimer!

Sam. What, Sir Edward Mortimer? Aye, sure.

He is head-keeper of the forest. 'Tis he who has shut himself up in melancholy;—sees no rich, and does so much good to the poor.

Raw. He has done me nought but evil. A gun cannot be carried on the border, here, but he has scent on't, at a league's distance. He is a thorn to me. His scouts this night were after me—all on the watch. I'll be revenged—I'll;—so, the brandy.—

Enter BARBARA, with the Liquor.

Raw. [*After drinking.*] 'Tis right, i'faith!

Sam. That 'tis, I'll be sworn; for I smuggled it myself. We do not live so near the coast for nothing.

Raw. Sir Edward Mortimer, look to it.

Barb. Sir Edward Mortimer! O, dear father, what of him?

Raw. Aye, now thou art all agog! Thou wouldst hear somewhat of that smooth-tongued fellow, his secretary, — his clerk, Wilford; whom thou so often meet'st in the forest. I have news on't. Look how you walk thither again. What, thou wouldst betray me to him, I warrant;—conspire against your father.

Sam. Aye, conspire against your father!—and your tender loving brother, you viper, you!

Barb. Beshrew me, father, I meant no harm: and, indeed, indeed, Wilford is as handsome a—I mean as good a youth as ever breathed. If I thought he meant ill by you, I should hate him.

Raw. When didst see him last? Speak!

Barb. You terrify me so, father, I am scarce able to speak. Yesternoon, by the copse: 'twas but to read with him the book of sonnets he gave me.

Sam. That's the way your sly, grave rogues, work into the hearts of the females. I never knew any good come of a girl's reading sonnets, with a learned clerk, in a copse.

Raw. Let me hear no more of your meetings. I am content to think you would not plot my undoing.

Barb. I?—O father!

Raw. But he may plot yours. Mark me;—Fortune has thrust me forth to prowl, like the wolf;—but the wolf is anxious for its young:—I am an outcast, whom hunger has harden'd. I violate the law; but feeling is not dead within me; and, callous villain as I am accounted, I would tear that greater villain piecemeal, who would violate my child, and rob an old man of the little remains of comfort wretchedness has left him. [*A knocking at the door. A voice without.*] Hilliho! ho!

Raw. How now!

Sam. There! an they be not after us already. I'll—We have talked, too, till 'tis broad day-light.

Wilford. [*Without.*] Open, good master Rawbold; I would speak to you, suddenly.

Barb. O Heaven! 'tis the voice of Wilford himself.

Raw. Wilford! I'm glad on't:—Now he shall—I'm glad on't. Open the door: quickly, I say;—he shall smart for it.

Sam. Are you mad, father? 'Tis *we* shall smart for it. Let in the keeper's head man! The buck, you have just shot, you know, is hard at hand.

Raw. Open, I say.

Sam. O Lord! I defy any secretary's nose not to smell stolen venison, now, the moment 'tis thrust near our hovel.

[SAMSON opens the door.

Enter WILFORD.

Wilf. Save you, good people! You are Gilbert Rawbold, as I take it.

Raw. I am. Your message here, young man,

bodes me no good: but I *am* Gilbert Rawbold;—and here's my daughter. Do'st know her?

Wilf. Ah, Barbara, good wench! how fares it with you?

Raw. Look on her well;—then consult your own conscience;—'tis difficult, haply, for a secretary to find one. You are a villain.

Wilf. You lie:—Hold, I crave pardon. You are her father; she is innocent, and you are unhappy: I respect virtue and misfortune too much to shock the one or insult the other.

Raw. 'Sdeath! why meet my daughter in the forest?

Wilf. Because I love her.

Raw. And would ruin her.

Wilf. That's a strange way of shewing one's love, methinks. I have a simple notion, Gilbert, that the thought of having taken a base advantage of a poor girl's affection might go nigh to break a man's sleep, and give him unquiet dreams: now, I love my night's rest, and shall do nothing to disturb it.

Raw. Wouldst not poison her mind?

Wilf. 'Tis not my method, friend, of dosing a patient. Look ye, Gilbert; her mind is a fair flower, stuck in the rude soil, here, of surrounding ignorance, and smiling in the chill of poverty:—I would fain cheer it with the little sunshine I possess of comfort and information. My parents were poor, like her's: should occasion serve, I might, haply, were all parties agreed, make her my wife. To offer aught else would affect her, you, and myself; and I have no talent at making three people uneasy at the same time.

Raw. Your hand:—on your own account, we are friends.

Barb. O dear father!

Raw. Be silent. Now to your errand. 'Tis from Mortimer.

Wilf. I come from Sir Edward.

Raw. I know his malice. He would oppress me with his power; he would starve me, and my family. Search my house.

Sam. No, father, no. You forget the buck under the furze. *[Aside.*

Raw. Let him do his worst: but let him beware: — a tyrant! a villain!

Wilf. Hark ye! — he is my master. I owe him my gratitude — every thing: — and had you been any but my Barbara's father, and spoken so much against him, my indignation had work'd into my knuckles, and cram'd the words down your rusty throat.

Sam. I do begin to perceive how this will end. Father will knock down the secretary, as flat as a buck.

Raw. Why am I singled out? Is there no mark for the vengeance of office to shoot its shaft at but me? This morning, as he dog'd me in the forest —

Wilf. Hush, Rawbold: — keep your counsel. Should you make it public, he must notice it.

Raw. Did he not notice it?

Wilf. No matter; — but he has sent me, thus early, Gilbert, with this relief to your distresses, which he has heard of. Here are twenty marks, for you, and your family.

Raw. From Sir Edward Mortimer!

Wilf. 'Tis his way; — but he would not have it mention'd. He is one of those judges who, in their office, will never warp the law to save offenders: but his private charity bids him assist the needy, before their necessities drive them to crimes, which his public duty must punish.

Raw. Did Mortimer do this! did *he*! Heaven bless him! Oh, young man, if you knew half the misery — my wife — my children! — Shame o'nt!

I have stood many a tug, but the drops, now, fall in spite of me. I am not ungrateful; but ——— I cannot stand it. We will talk of Barbara when I have more man about me.

[Exit, up the stair-case.]

Wilf. Farewell. I must home to the lodge quickly. Ere this, I warrant I am look'd for.

Barb. Farewell.

QUINTETTO.

WILFORD.

Wilf. *The sun has tipt the hills with red;
The lout now flourishes his flail;
The punchy parson waddles from his bed,
Heavy, and heated, with his last night's ale.
Adieu! adieu! I must be going;
The dapper village cock is crowing.
Adieu, my little Barbara!*

Barb. *Adieu! — and should you think upon
The lowly cottage, when you're gone,
Where two old oaks, with ivy deckt,
Their branches o'er the roof project,
I pray, good sir, just recollect
That there lives little Barbara.*

Sam. *And Samson too, good sir, in smoke and
smother;
Barbara's very tender, loving brother.*

1 Boy. [To SAMSON.] *Brother, look! the sun aloof,
Peeps through the crannies of the roof.
Give us food, good brother, pray!
For we ate nothing yesterday.*

Children. *Give us food, good brother, pray!*

Sam. *Oh, fire and faggot! what a squalling!*

Barb. *Do not chide 'em. —*

Sam. *Damn their bawling!*

*Hungry stomachs there's no balking :
I wish I could stop their mouths with talking :
But very good meat is (cent. per cent.)
Dearer than very good argument.*

Wilf. *Adieu, adieu ! I must be going ;
The dapper village cock is crowing.
Adieu, my little Barbara !* }

Barb. *Oh, think on little Barbara !* }

Children. *Give us food !*

Sam. *Curse their squalling !*

Wilf. and Barb. *Adieu ! adieu !*

Sam. *Damn their bawling !*

SAMSON, WILFORD, and BARBARA.

*Adieu, my little Barbara !
Oh, think on little Barbara !
You'll think on little Barbara !* }

SCENE II.

An old-fashioned Hall, in SIR EDWARD MORTIMER'S Lodge.

*Several SERVANTS cross the Stage, with Flaggons,
Tankards, cold Meat, &c. &c.*

Enter ADAM WINTERTON.

Wint. *Softly, varlets, softly ! — see you crack
none of the stone flaggons. Nay, 'tis plain your
own breakfasts be toward, by your skuttling thus.
— A goodly morning ! Why, you giddy-pated
knave, [To one of the SERVANTS,] is it so you
carry a dish of pottery ? no heed of our good*

master's, Sir Edward Mortimer's, ware? Fie, Peter Pickbone, fie!

Serv. I am in haste, master steward, to break my fast.

Wint. To break thy fast! — to break thy neck, it should seem. Ha! ha! good i'faith! — Go thy ways, knave! [*Exit SERVANT.*] 'Tis thus the rogues ever have me. I would fain be angry with them, but, straight, a merry jest passeth across me, and my choler is over. To break thy neck, it should seem! ha, ha! 'twas well conceited, by St. Thomas! — My table-book, for the business of the day. Ah, my memory holds not as it did; — it needs the spur. [*Looking over his book.*] Nine-and-forty years have I been house-steward and butler. Let me see. — Six winters ago, come Christmas eve, died my old master, Sir Marmaduke. — Ah! he was a heavy loss. I look'd to drop before him. He was hale and tough: — but, thank Heaven, I ha' seen him out, my dear old master! — Let me see — my tables. [*Looking over them and singing.*]

“ *When birds do carol on the bush,
With a heigh no nonny*” — — *heigho!*

Enter Cook.

Cook. Master steward! good master Winterton!

Wint. Who calls merry old Adam Winterton? Ha, Jacob Cook! well bethought, — the dinner. Nay, I bear a brain: thinking men will combine. I never see Jacob Cook but it reminds me of ordering dinner. We must have — what say my tables? — we must have, Jacob — Nay, by St. Thomas, I perceive 'twas Christmas eve seven years died my good old master, Sir Marmaduke.

Cook. I pray you dispatch me, good master steward. I would bestir in time.

Wint. Then I would counsel thee to rise earlier, Jacob; for truth to say thou art a sluggard. Ha! good i'faith! — Let me see; — Dinner — oh! Hast thou prepared the fare I order'd yester-night?

Cook. All kill'd, and ready: but will not Sir Edward Mortimer pall on his diet? 'Tis the very same bill of fare we served yesterday.

Wint. Hey — let me see; — I have settled the dinners, throughout the week, in my tables. Now, by our Lady, I have mistaken, and read Thursday twice over! — Ha! ha! ha! — A pestilence upon me! Well, Sir Edward (Heaven bless him!) must bear with me: he must e'en dine to-day on what he dined on yesterday! — 'tis too late to be changed. Get thee gone, knave, get thee gone!

Cook. [*Going out*] — Age has so overdone this old Dry-bones, he'll shortly tumble from the spit. — "Thursday twice over!" — This comes of being able to read. An old buzzard! [*Exit.*]

Wint. These fatigues of office somewhat wear a man. I have had a long lease on't. I ha' seen out queen Mary, queen Elizabeth, and king James. 'Tis e'en almost time that I should retire, to begin to enjoy myself. Eh! by St. Thomas! hither trips the fair mistress Blanch. Of all the waiting gentlewomen I ever look'd on, during the two last reigns, none stirr'd my fancy like this little rose-bud.

Enter BLANCH.

Blanch. A good day, good Adam Winterton.

Wint. What wag! what tulip! I never see thee, but I am a score of years the younger.

Blanch. Nay, then, let us not meet often, or you will soon be in your second childhood.

Wint. What you come from your mistress, the

Lady Helen, in the forest here ; and would speak with Sir Edward Mortimer, I warrant ?

Blanch. I would. Is his melancholy worship stirring yet ?

Wint. Fie, you mad-cap ! He is my master, and your lady's friend.

Blanch. Yes, truly, it seems, her only one, poor lady : he protects her now she is left an orphan.

Wint. A blessing on his heart ! I would it were merrier. Well, she is much beholden to Sir Edward for his consolation : and he never affords her his advice, but his bounty is sure to follow it.

Blanch. Just so a crow will nourish its nestling : he croaks first, and then gives her food.

Wint. Ha, ha ! good i'faith ! — but wicked. Thy company will corrupt, and lead me astray. Should they happen to marry, (and I have my fancies on't,) I'll dance a galliard with thee, in the hall, on the round oak table. 'Sbud ! when I was a youth, I would ha' caper'd with St. Vitus, and beat him.

Blanch. You are as likely to dance now, as they to marry. What has hinder'd them, if the parties be agreed ? — yet I have, now, been with my mistress these two years, since Sir Edward first came hither, and placed her in the cottage, hard by his lodge.

Wint. Tush ! family reasons : — thou knowest nothing : thou art scarce catch'd. Two years back, when we came from Kent, and Sir Edward first enter'd on his office, here, of head-keeper, thou wert a colt, running wild about New Forest. I hired you myself, to attend on Madam Helen.

Blanch. Nay I shall never forget it. But you were as frolicsome, then, as I, methinks. Dost remember the box on the ear I gave thee, Adam ?

Wint. Peace, peace, you pie ! an you prate thus, I'll stop your mouth. I will, by St. Thomas !

Blanch. An I be inclined to the contrary, I do not think you are able to stop it.

Wint. Out, you baggage! thou hast more tricks than a kitten. Well, go thy ways. Sir Edward is at his study, and there thou wilt find him. Ah, mistress Blanch! had you but seen me in the early part of Queen Elizabeth's reign!

Blanch. How old art thou now, Adam?

Wint. Four-score, come Martlemas: and, by our Lady, I can run with a lapwing.

Blanch. Canst thou? — well said! — thou art a merry old man, and shalt have a kiss of me, on one condition.

Wint. Shall I? odsbud! name it and 'tis mine.

Blanch. Then catch me. [Runs off.]

Wint. Pestilence on't! there was a time when my legs had served: — but, to speak truth, I never thrust them, now, into my scarlet hose that they do not remember me of two sticks of red sealing-wax. I was a clean-limb'd stripling, when I first stood behind Sir Marmaduke's arm-chair, in the old oak eating-room.

SONG. — ADAM WINTERTON.

*Sir Marmaduke was a hearty Knight ;
Good man ! Old man !
He's painted standing bold upright,
With his hose roll'd over his knee ; —
His perriwig's as white as chalk ;
And on his fist he holds a hawk ;
And he looks like the head
Of an ancient family.*

II.

*His dining-room was long and wide ;
Good man ! Old man !*

*His spaniels lay by the fireside ; —
 And in other parts, d'ye see,
 Cross-bows, tobacco-pipes, old hats,
 A saddle, his wife, and a litter of cats ;
 And he look'd like the head
 Of an ancient family.*

III.

*He never turn'd the poor from his gate ;
 Good man ! Old man !
 But always ready to break the pate
 Of his Country's enemy.
 What Knight could do a better thing,
 Than serve the poor, and fight for his King ?
 And so may every head
 Of an ancient family.*

Enter WILFORD.

Wilf. Every new act of Sir Edward's charity sets me a-thinking ; and the more I think, the more I am puzzled. 'Tis strange that a man should be so ill at ease, who is continually doing good. At times, the wild glare of his eye is frightful ; and, last night, when I was writing for him, in the library, I could not help fancying I was shut up with the devil. I would stake my life there's a secret ; and I could almost give my life to unravel it. I must to him, for my morning's employment.

[Crossing the stage.

Wint. Ah ! boy ! Wilford ! secretary ! whither away, lad !

Wilf. Mr. Winterton ! — Aye, marry, this good old man has the clue, could I but coax him to give it to me ! — A good morning to you, sir !

Wint. Yea, and the like to thee, boy. Come, thou shalt have a cup of Canary, from my corner cupboard, yonder.

Wilf. Not a drop.

Wint. Troth, I bear thee a good will for thy honest, old, dead father's sake.

Wilf. I do thankfully perceive it, sir. Your placing me in Sir Edward's family, some nine months ago, when my poor father died, and left me friendless, will never out of my memory.

Wint. Tut, boy, no merit of mine in assisting the friendless: 'tis our duty. I could never abide to see honest industry chop-fallen. I love to have folks merry about me, to my heart.

Wilf. I would you could instil some mirth into our good master Sir Edward. You are an old domestic, — the only one he brought with him, two years back, from Kent, — and might venture to give his spirits a jog. He seems devoured with spleen, and melancholy.

Wint. You are a prying boy. — Go to. — I have told thee, a score of times, I would not have thee curious about our worthy master's humour. By my troth, I am angry with thee. What a boy like you? — a — Thou hast put me in choler. Continue this, and I'll undo thee; — I'll un — sbud! I'll unprotect thee. — Ha, good, i'faith! Nay, marry, my rage holds not long: — flash and out again. Unprotect thee! — ha! 'twas exceeding good, by Saint Thomas!

Wilf. I should cease to pry, sir, would you but once (as I think you have more than once seem'd inclined) gratify my much-raised curiosity.

Wint. Well said, i'faith! I do not doubt thee. I warrant thou wouldst cease to inquire, when I had told thee all thou wouldst know. — What, greenhorn, didst think to trap the old man? — Go thy ways, boy! I have a head. — Old Adam Winterton can sift a subtle speech to the bottom.

Wilf. Ah! good sir, you need not tell me that.

Young as I am, I can admire that experience, in another, which I want myself.

Wint. There is something marvellous engaging in this young man! You have a world of promise, boy. Sixty years ago, in Queen Elizabeth's time, I was just such another. I remember Marian Potpan, the farmer's daughter, of Stocks Green, was then enamour'd of me. Well, beware how you offend Sir Edward.

Wilf. I would not willingly, for the world. He has been the kindest master to me. He has inform'd my mind, relieved my distresses, clothed me, shelter'd me:—but, whilst my fortunes ripen in the warmth of his goodness, the frozen gloom of his countenance chills me.

Wint. Well, well, take heed how you prate on't. Out on these babbling boys! There is no keeping a secret with youngers in a family.

Wilf. [*Very eagerly.*] What then there *is* a secret!—'Tis as I guess'd after all.

Wint. Why, how now, hot-head? ——— Mercy on me! an this tinder-box boy do not make me shake with apprehension. Is it thus you take my frequent counsel?

Wilf. Dear sir, 'tis your counsel which most I covet. Give me but that; admit me to your confidence; steer me with your advice (which I ever held excellent), and, with such a pilot, I may sail prosperously through a current which, otherwise, might wreck me.

Wint. 'Tis melting to see how unfledged youth will shelter itself, like a chicken, under the wing of such a tough old cock as myself! Well, well, I'll think on't, boy.

Wilf. The old answer;—yet, he softens apace: could I but clench him now — [*Aside.*] Faith, sir, 'tis a raw morning; and I care not if I taste the Canary your kindness offer'd.

Wint. Aha! lad! say'st thou so? Just my modest humour when I was young. I ever refused my glass at first, but I came to it ere I had quitted my company. Here's the key of the corner cupboard, yonder. See you do not crack the bottle, you heedless goose, you!

[*Wilford takes out the bottle and glasses.*

Ha! fill it up. Od! it sparkles curiously. Here's to ——— I prithee, tell me now, Wilford, didst ever in thy life see a waiting-gentlewoman with a more inviting eye than the little Mrs. Blanch?

Wilf. Here's Mrs. Blanch! [*Drinks.*

Wint. Ah, wag! well, go thy ways! Well, when I was of thy age ——— odsbud! no matter; 'tis past, now; — but here's the little Mrs. Blanch.

[*Drinks.*

Wilf. 'Tis thought, here, Sir Edward means to marry her lady, Madam Helen.

Wint. Nay, I know not. She has long been enamour'd of him, poor lady! when he was the gay, the gallant Sir Edward, in Kent. Ah well! two years make a wond'rous change!

Wilf. Yes, 'tis a good tough love now-a-days, that will hold out a couple of twelvemonths.

Wint. Away, I mean not so, you giddy pate! He is all honour; and as steady in his course as the sun: yet I wonder, sometimes, he can bear to look upon her.

Wilf. Eh? why so? Did he not bring her, under his protection, to the Forest; since, 'tis said, she lost her relations?

Wint. Hush boy! on your life do not name her uncle — I would say her relations.

Wilf. Her uncle? wherefore? Where's the harm in having an uncle, dead or alive?

Wint. Peace, peace! In that uncle lies the secret.

Wilf. Indeed! how, good Adam Winterton? I prithee, how?

Wint. Ah! 'twas a heavy day! Poor Sir Edward is now a broken spirit; — but if ever a good spirit walk'd the earth, in trunk hose, he is one.

Wilf. Let us drink Sir Edward's health.

Wint. That I would, though 'twere a mile to the bottom. [*Drinks.*] Ha, 'tis cheering, i'faith! Well, in troth, I have regard for thee, boy, for thy father's sake.

Wilf. Oh, good sir! and this uncle, you say —

Wint. Of Madam Helen; — ah! there lies the mischief.

Wilf. What mischief can be in *him*? why, he is dead.

Wint. Come nearer: — see you prate not, now, on your life. Our good master, Sir Edward, was arraign'd on his account, in open court.

Wilf. Arraign'd! how mean you?

Wint. Alas, boy! tried. — Tried for — nearer yet — his murder.

Wilf. Mu — mur — Murder! [*drops the glass.*]

Wint. Why, what! why, Wilford! out, alas: the boy's passion will betray all! what, Wilford, I say!

Wilf. You have curdled my blood!

Wint. What, varlet, thou dardest not think ill of our worthy master?

Wilf. I — I am his secretary: — often alone with him, at dead midnight, in his library: — the candles in the sockets — and a man glaring upon me who has committed mur — ugh!

Wint. Committed! thou art a base, lying knave, to say it: and, while I wear a rapier, I'll — tush! Heaven help me! I forget I am fourscore. Well, well — hear me, pettish boy, hear me. Why, look now, thou dost not attend.

Wilf. I — I mark; I mark.

Wint. I tell thee, then, our good Sir Edward was beloved in Kent ; where he had returned, a year before, from his travels. Madam Helen's uncle was hated by all the neighbourhood, rich and poor : — a mere brute ; dost mark me.

Wilf. Like enough : but, when brutes walk upon two legs, the law of the land, thank Heaven ! will not suffer us to butcher them.

Wint. Go to, you fire-brand ! Our good master labour'd all he could, for many a month, to sooth his turbulence ; but in vain. He pick'd a quarrel with Sir Edward, in the public county assembly ; nay, the strong ruffian struck him down, and trampled on him. Think on that, Wilford ! on our good master, Sir Edward, whose great soul was nigh to burst with the indignity.

Wilf. Well, but the end on't ?

Wint. Why, our young master took horse for his own house, determin'd, as it appear'd, to send a challenge to this white-liver'd giant, in the morning.

Wilf. I see : he kill'd him in a duel. That's another kind of butchery, which the law allows not ; true humanity shudders at ; and false honour justifies.

Wint. See, now, how you fly off ! Sir Edward's revenge, boy, was baffled. For his antagonist was found dead in the street, that night ; kill'd, by some unknown assassins, on his return from the assembly.

Wilf. Indeed ! *unknown* assassins !

Wint. Nay, 'tis plain, our good Sir Edward had no hand in the wicked act : for he was tried, as I told you, at the next assize. Mercy on me ! 'twas a crowded court ; and how gentle and simple threw up their caps, at his acquittal ! Heaven be thank'd ! he was clear'd beyond a shadow of doubt.

Wilf. He was ? — I breathe again. 'Twas a hap-

py thing : 'twas the only way left of cleansing him from a foul suspicion.

Wint. But alas ! lad, 'tis his principal grief. He is full of nice feeling, and high-flown honour : and the thought of being tried, for such a crime, has given him his heart's wound. Poor gentleman ! he has shunned the world ever since. He was once the life of all company — but now !

Sir Ed. [*Without.*] Winterton !

Wint. Hark ! some one calls. Out on thee ! thou hast sunk my spirits into my heels. Who calls merry old Adam Winterton ?

Sir Ed. [*Without.*] Adam Winterton ! come hither to me.

Wint. Nay, by our Lady, 'tis Sir Edward himself ! — Pestilence on't ! if I seem sad now, 'twill be noted. I come, good Sir Edward.

“ *When birds — (not a word, on thy life) —
do carol on the bush,*

“ *With a hey no nonny*” — Mercy on me !

[*Exit.*]

Wilf. My throat's parch'd, and my blood freezes ! A quart of brandy could'nt moisten the one, nor thaw the other. This accounts, then, for all. Poor, unhappy gentleman ! This unravels all, from the first day of my service — when a deep groan made me run into the library, and I found him locking up his papers, in the iron chest, as pale as ashes. — Eh ? — What can be in that chest ! — Perhaps some proof of — no, I shudder at the suggestion — 'Tis not possible one so good can be guilty of — I know not what to think — nor what to resolve. But curiosity is roused, and, come what may, I'll have an eye upon him. [*Exit*

SCENE III.

A Library.

SIR EDWARD MORTIMER *discovered at a Writing-Table.* ADAM WINTERTON *attending.*

Mort. 'Tis his first trespass, so we'll quit him,
Adam: —

But caution him how he offend again.

As Keeper of the Forest, I should fine him.

Wint. Nay, that your worship should. He'll prove
ere long,

— Mark but my words — a sturdy poacher. Well,
'Tis you know best.

Mort. Well, well, no matter, Adam; —
He has a wife, and child.

Wint. Ah! bless your honour!

Mort. They kill'd his dog?

Wint. Aye, marry, sir: — a lurcher.

Black Martin Wincot, the groom-keeper, shot him;
A perilous good aim. — I warrant me,
The rogue has lived this year upon that lurcher.

Mort. Poor wretch! — Oh! well bethought!

Send Walter to me; —

I would employ him: he must ride for me,
On business of much import.

Wint. Lackaday!

That it should chance so! I have sent him forth,
To Winchester, to buy me flannel hose;
For winter's coming on. Good lack! that things
Should fall so crossly!

Mort. Nay, nay, do not fret: —

'Tis better that my business cool, good Adam,
Than thy old limbs.

Wint. Ah! you've a kindly heart!

Mort. Is Wilford waiting?

Wint. Wilford! mercy on me!

I tremble now to hear his name. [*aside.*] He is:—
Here in the hall, sir.

Mort. Send him in, I prithee.

Wint. I shall, sir. Heaven bless you! Heaven
bless you! [*Exit.*]

Mort. Good morning, good old heart: — This
honest soul

Would fain look cheery in my house's gloom;
And, like a gay and sturdy ever-green,
Smiles, in the midst of blast, and desolation,
Where all around him withers. — Well, well, —
wither!

Perish this frail and fickle frame! — this clay,
That, in its dross-like compound, doth contain
The mind's pure ore and essence. — Oh! that mind
That mind of man! that godlike spring of action!
That source, whence learning, virtue, honour,
flow! —

Which lifts us to the stars; which carries us
O'er the swol'n waters of the angry deep,
As swallows skim the air! — That fame's sole foun-
tain!

That doth transmit a fair and spotless name,
When the vile trunk is rotten: — Give me *that*!
Oh! give me but to live in after-age,
Remember'd and unsullied! — Heaven and earth!
Let my pure flame of honour shine in story,
When I am cold in death — and the slow fire,
That wears my vitals now, will no more move me
Than 'twould a corpse within a monument.

[*A knock at the door of the library.*]

How now! Who's there? Come in.

Enter WILFORD.

Wilford! is't you? you were not wont to knock.

Wilf. I fear'd I might surprise you, sir.

Mort. Surprise me!

Wilf. I mean — disturb you, sir : — yes — at your studies.

Disturb you at your studies.

Mort. Very strange !

You were not used to be so cautious.

Wilf. No —

I never used — but I — hum — I have learnt —

Mort. Learnt !

Wilf. Better manners, sir. I was quite raw,
When, in your bounty, you first shelter'd me :
But, thanks to your great goodness, and the lessons
Of Mr. Winterton, I still improve,
And pick up something daily.

Mort. Aye, indeed ! —

Winterton ! — No, he dare not. [*aside.*] — Hark
you, sir ! [*Stepping up to him.*]

Wilf. Sir !

Mort. [*Retreating from him.*] What am I about ?
Oh, Honour ! Honour !

Thy pile should be so uniform, displace
One atom of thee, and the slightest breath
Of a rude peasant makes thy owner tremble
For his whole building. — Reach me, from the
shelf,

The volume I was busied in last night.

Wilf. Last night, sir ?

Mort. Aye ; — it treats of Alexander.

Wilf. Oh, I remember, sir ; — of Macedon.
I made some extracts by your order.

[*Goes to the Book-Case.*]

Mort. Books

(My only commerce now) will, sometimes, rouse
me

Beyond my nature. I have been so warm'd,
So heated by a well-turn'd rhapsody,
That I have seem'd the hero of the tale,
So glowingly described. Draw me a man

Struggling for fame, attaining, keeping it,
Dead ages since, and the historian
Decking his memory, in polish'd phrase,
And I can follow him through every turn,
Grow wild in his exploits, myself *himself*,
Until the thick pulsation of my heart
Wakes me, — to ponder on the thing I am!

Wilf. [Giving him the book.

To my poor thinking, sir, this Alexander
Would scarcely rouse a man to follow him.

Mort. Indeed! why so, lad? He is reckon'd
brave,

Wise, generous, learn'd, by older heads than thine.

Wilf. I cannot tell, sir: — I have but a glean-
ing. —

He conquer'd all the world; — but left uncon-
quer'd

A world of his own passions; — and they led him,
(It seems so there,) on petty provocation,
Even to murder.

[MORTIMER starts — WILFORD and he ex-
change looks — both confused.

I have touch'd the string;

'Twas unawares — I cannot help it. [Aside.

Mort. [Attempting to recover himself.] Wil-
ford —

Wilford, I — you mistake the character —

I — mark you — he — death and eternal tortures!

[Dashes the book on the floor, and seizes WILFORD.

Slave! I will crush thee! pulverise thy frame,

That no vile particle of prying nature

May — Ha, ha, ha! — I will not harm thee,
boy! —

O, agony! [Exit.

Wilf. Is this the high-flown honour, and delicate
feeling, old Winterton talk'd of, that cannot bear
a glance at the trial? — Delicate! had I been born
under a throttling planet, I had never survived this

collaring. This may be guilt. If so — well, what have I to do with the knowledge on't? — what *could* I do? cut off my benefactor! who gives me bread! who is respected for his virtues, pitied for his misfortunes, loved by his family, bless'd by the poor! — Pooh! he is innocent. This is his pride and shame. He was acquitted; — thousands witness'd it; — thousands rejoic'd at it; — thousands — eh! the key left in the iron chest! Circumstance and mystery tempt me at every turn. Ought I? — no matter. These are no common incitements, and I submit to the impulse. I heard him stride down the stairs. It opens with a spring, I see. I tremble in every joint! *[Goes to the chest.]*

Enter SIR EDWARD MORTIMER.

Mort. I had forgot the key, and ——— ha! by hell!

[Sees WILFORD; snatches a pistol from the table, runs up to him, and holds it to his head. WILFORD on his knees, claps down the lid of the trunk which he has just open'd. After an apparent struggle of mind, MORTIMER throws the pistol from him.]

Mort. Begone! — Come back! — Come hither to me!

Mark me; — I see thou dost at every turn —
And I have noted thee too Thou hast found
(I know not how) some clue to my disgrace: —
Aye, my disgrace; we must not mince it now:
Public dishonour! — trod on! — buffeted!
Then tried, as the foul demon who had foil'd
My manly means of vengeance. Anguish gnaws
me;

Mountains of shame are piled upon me! — Me,
Who have made fame my idol. 'Twas enough;
But something must be super-added: You —

A worm, a viper I have warm'd, must plant,
In venom'd sport, your sting into my wounds,
Too tender e'en for tenderness to touch,
And work me into madness. Thou wouldst
question

My very — slave! — my very innocence;
Ne'er doubted yet, by judges, nor arraigners.
Wretch! you have wrung this from me; be content:

I am sunk low enough.

Wilf. [*Returning the key.*] Oh, sir! I ever
Honour'd and loved you; but I merit all.
My passions hurried me I know not whither.
Do with me as you please, my kind, wrong'd
master!

Discard me — thrust me forth — nay, kill me —
Mort. Kill you!

Wilf. I know not what I say. — I know but this;
That I would die to serve you.

Enter a SERVANT.

Serv. Sir, your brother
Is just alighted at the gate.

Mort. My brother!
He could not time it worse. Wilford, remember!
Come show me to him. [*Exit, with servant.*]

Wilf. Remember! I shall never, while I live,
forget it: nay, I shall never, while I live, forgive
myself. My knees knock together still; and the
cold drops stand on my forehead, like rain-water on
a pent-house.

Enter BARBARA.

Barb. Wilford!

Wilf. Eh? Barbara! How camest thou here?

Barb. With my father, who waits below, to see
Sir Edward.

Wilf. He ——— he is busied ; he cannot see him now ; he is with his brother.

Barb. Troth, I am sorry for it. My poor father's heart is bursting with gratitude, and he would fain ease it, by pouring out his thanks to his benefactor. Oh, Wilford, yours is a happy lot, to have such a master as Sir Edward !

Wilf. Happy ? Oh ! yes — I — I am very happy

Barb. Mercy ! has any ill befallen you ?

Wilf. No ; nothing ; 'tis all my happiness. My happiness is like your father's gratitude, Barbara ; and, at times, it goes near to choke me.

Barb. Nay, I'm sure there's more in this. Bless me, you look pale ! I couldn't bear to see you ill, or uneasy, Wilford.

Wilf. Couldn't you, Barbara ? Well, well, I shall be better presently. 'Tis nothing of import.

Barb. Trust me, I hope not.

Wilf. Well, question me no more on't now, I beseech you, Barbara.

Barb. Believe me, I would not question you but to console you, Wilford. I would scorn to pry into any one's grief ; much more yours, Wilford, to satisfy a busy curiosity. Though, I am told, there are such in the world who would.

Wilf. I — I am afraid there are, Barbara. But come, no more of this. 'Tis a passing cloud on my spirits, and will soon blow over.

Barb. Ah ! could I govern your fortunes, foul weather should ne'er harm you.

Wilf. Should not it, sweet ! Kiss me. [*Kisses her.*] The lips of a woman are a sovereign cordial for melancholy.

DUET. — WILFORD and BARBARA.

Wilf. Sweet little Barbara, when you are advancing,
Sweet little Barbara, my cares you remove ;

Ors. And I tell you, Captain Armstrong, — but always under favour, you being our leader, — you are too humane.

Arm. Humanity is scarcely counted a fault : if so, 'tis a fault on the right side.

Ors. Umph ! perhaps not with us : — we are robbers.

Arm. And why should robbers lack humanity ? They who plunder most respect it as a virtue, and make a show on't, to gild their vices. Lawyers, physicians, placemen, all — all plunder and slay, but all pretend to humanity.

Ors. They are regulars, and plunder by licence !

Arm. Then let us quacks set the regulars a better example.

Ors. This humanity, Captain, is a high horse you are ever bestride upon. Some day, mark my word, he'll fling you.

Arm. Cruelty is a more dangerous beast : — when the rider is thrown, his brains are kick'd out, and no one pities him.

Ors. Like enough ; — but your tough horseman, who ventures boldly, is never dismounted. When I am engaged in a desperate chase, (as we are, Captain,) I stick at nothing. I hate milk-sops.

Arm. And love mutiny. Take heed, Orson ; I have before caution'd you not to glance at *me*.

Ors. I say nothing : but if some escape to inform against us, whom we have robb'd, 'tis none of my fault. Dead men tell no tales.

Arm. Wretch ! Speak that again, and you shall tell none. [*Holds a carbine to his head.*]

Ors. Flash away ! — I don't fear death.

Arm. More shame for thee ; for thou art unfit to meet it.

Ors. I know my trade. I set powder, ball, and rope, at defiance.

Arm. Brutè ! you mistake headstrong insensibi-

lity for courage. Do not mistake my horror of it for cowardice: for I, who shudder at cruelty, will fell your boldness to the earth, when I see you practise it. Submit.

Ors. I do. I know not what 'tis, but I have told you, often, there is something about you awes me. I cannot tell; — I could kill twenty to your one.

Arm. There 'tis; — thou wouldst dart upon weak unguarded man, like a tiger. A ferocious animal, whether crawling or erect, ever shrinks from fair opposition.

Ors. My courage was never yet doubted, Captain.

Arm. Your nerves, fool. Thou art a mere machine. Could I but give it motion, I would take an oak from the forest, here, clap a flint into it for a heart, and make as bold a fellow as thou art. Listen to my orders.

Ors. I obey.

Arm. Get thee to our den: put on thy disguise; — then hie thee to the market-town for provision for our company. Here — here is part of the spoil we took yester-night: see you bring an honest account of what you lay out.

[Giving money.

Ors. My honour! —

Arm. Well, I do not doubt thee, here. Our profession is singular; it's followers do not cheat one another. You will not be back till dusk; see you fall not on any poor straggling peasant as you return.

Ors. I would fain encounter the solitary man, who is sometimes wandering by night about the forest; — he is rich.

Arm. Not for your life: — 'tis Sir Edward Mortimer, the head-keeper. Touch him not; 'tis too near home; — besides, he is no object for plunder.

I have watch'd him, at midnight, stealing from his lodge, to wander like one crazed. He is good, too, to the poor; and should walk unmolested by charity's charter. 'Twere pity that he who administers to necessity all day, should be rifled by necessity at night. An thou shouldst meet him, I charge thee spare him.

Ors. I must, if it be your order. This sparing doctrine will go nigh, at last, to starve all the thieves. When a man takes to the trade of a wolf, he should not go like a lamb to his business. [Exit.

Arm. This fellow is downright villain: harden'd and relentless. I have felt, in my penury, the world trample on me:—it has driven me to take that, desperately, which wanting I should starve. Death! my spirit cannot brook to see a sleek knave walk, negligently, by his fellow in misery, and suffer him to rot. I will wrench that comfort from him which he will not bestow.—But nature puts a bar;—let him administer to my wants, and pass on:—I have done with him.

SONG.—ARMSTRONG.

*When the Robber his victim has noted,
When the Free-booter darts on his prey,
Let Humanity spare the devoted;
Let Mercy forbid him to slay.*

*Since my hope is by penury blighted,
My sword must the traveller daunt;
I will snatch from the rich man, benighted,
The gold he denies to my want.*

*But the victim when, once, I have noted,
At my foot when I look on my prey,
Let Humanity spare the devoted;
Let Mercy forbid me to slay.*

SCENE II.

The Hall, in SIR EDWARD MORTIMER'S Lodge.

Enter FITZHARDING.

Fitz. Well, business must be minded : — but he
stays

A tedious time, methinks. — You, fellow!

[To a SERVANT, crossing the Hall.

Serv. Sir!

Fitz. Where is Sir Tristful? Where's Don Melancholy?

Serv. Who, sir?

Fitz. My brother, knave; Sir Edward Mortimer.

Serv. He was with you, but now, sir.

Fitz. Sir, I thank you.

That's information. Louts, and serving-men,
Can never parley straight. I met a fellow,
Here, on my way across the heath, — a hind, —
And ask'd how far to Lymington: I look'd
The answer would have bolted from his chops,
Bounce, like a pellet from a popgun. — No: —
He stared, and scratched his empty head, and cried
“ Where do you come from?” — Who brought in
my luggage?

Serv. It was not I, sir.

Fitz. There! — they never can!

Go to your master; pray him to despatch
His household work: — tell him I hate fat folios.
Plague! when I cross the country, here, to see him,
He leaves me, ramm'd into an elbow chair,
With a huge heavy book, that makes me nod,
Then tumbles on my toes. Tell him, do'st hear,
Captain Fitzharding's company has tired me.

Serv. Who's company? —

Fitz. My own, knave.

Serv. Sir, I shall.

[Exit.

Fitz. A book to me's a sovereign narcotic;
A lump of opium; every line a dose.
Edward is all deep reading, and black letter;
He shews it in his very chin: he speaks
Mere dictionary; and he pores on pages
That give plain men the headache. "Scarce and
curious,"

Are baits his learning nibbles at; — his brain
Is cramm'd with mouldy volumes; cramp, and use-
less;

Like a librarian's lumber-room. — Poor fellow!
Grief will do much! — well! some it drives to read-
ing,

And some to drinking: — 'twill do much! — this
trial —

A fool to fret so for't! his honour's clear.

Tut! I'm a soldier — know what honour is.

Had I been slander'd, and a fair Court-martial
Cleansed me from calumny, as white as snow,
I had ne'er moped, and fumed, and winced, and
kick'd,

But sat down heart-whole. Plague upon't! this
house

Appears the very cave of melancholy!

Nay, hold, I lie; — here comes a petticoat.

Enter BLANCH.

Od! a rare wench! This is the best edition
In Edward's whole collection. Here, come hither
Let me peruse you.

Blanch. Would you speak to me, sir?

Fitz. Aye, child. I'm going now to read you.

Blanch. Read me!

You'll find me full of errors, sir.

Fitz. No matter.

Come nearer, child: I cannot see to read
At such a distance.

Blanch. You had better, sir,
Put on your spectacles.

Fitz. Aye, there she has me!
A plague upon old Time! old Scythe and Hour-
glass

Has set his mark upon me. Hark ye, child!
You do not know me. You and I must have
Better acquaintance.

Blanch. O, I've heard of you.
You are Sir Edward's kinsman, sir; his brother.

Fitz. Aye—his half brother—by the mother's
side—
His elder brother.

Blanch. Yes, sir, I see that.

Fitz. This gipsy's tongue is like her eye: I know
not
Which is the sharpest. Tell me what's your name.

Blanch. My name is Blanch, sir; born, here, in
the forest.

Fitz. Sbud! I must be a Keeper in this forest.
Whither art going, sweet one?

Blanch. Home, sir.

Fitz. Home!
Why, is not this thy home?

Blanch. No, sir; I live
Some half mile hence; with madam Helen, sir.
I brought a letter from her, to Sir Edward.

Fitz. Odso, with Helen!—so—with her!—the
object

Of my grave brother's groaning passion. Plague!
I would 'twere in the house. I do not like
Your pastoral, rheumatic assignations,
Under an elm, by moonlight. This will end
In flannels and sciatica. My passion
Is not Arcadian. Tell me, pretty one,
Shall I walk with you home?

Blanch. No, sir, I thank you;
It would fatigue you, sadly.

Fitz. Fatigue me!

Oons! this wild forest filly, here, would make me
Grandfather to Methusaleh. Look here;
Here is a purse of money.

Blanch. O, the father!

What, will you give me any?

Fitz. Gold I find

The universal key; the *passe par tout*.

It will unlock a forest maiden's heart,

As easy as a politician's. Here;

Here are two pieces, rose-bud; buy a top-knot;
Make thyself happy with them.

Blanch. That I will.

The poor old woman, northward of the lodge,
Lies sick in bed. I'll take her this, poor soul,
To comfort her.

Fitz. Hold! — hey the devil! — hold.

This was not meant to comfort an *old* woman.

Blanch. Why, wouldn't you relieve her, sir?

Fitz. Um? — Yes: —

But — pshaw! pooh, prithee — there's a time for all
things.

Why tell me of her now, — of an old fool, —
Of comforting the aged, now?

Blanch. I thought

That you might have a fellow-feeling, sir.

Fitz. This little rural devil's laughing at me!

Oons! come and kiss me, jade. I am a soldier,
And justice of the peace.

Blanch. Then, shame upon you!

Your double calling might have taught you better.
I see your drift, now. Take your dirt again,

[*Throws down the money.*]

Good Captain Justice! — stoop for it; — and think

How an old soldier, and a justice looks,

When he is picking up the bribes he offers

To injure those he should protect; — the helpless,

The poor, and innocent.

[*Exit.*]

Fitz. I warrant me,
Could I but see my face, now, in a glass,
That I look wond'rous sheepish. I'm ashamed
To pick up the two pieces; — let them lie. —
I would not wrong the innocent; — good reason;
There be so few that are so: — she is honest;
I must make reparation. Odso! Wilford!

Enter WILFORD

How fares it, boy?

Wilf. I thank you, sir. I hope you have enjoy'd
Your health, these three months past, since last you
honour'd us

With your good presence at the lodge.

Fitz. Indifferent.

Some cramps and shooting pains, boy. I have
dropped

Some cash here, but I am afraid to bend,
To pick it up again, lest it should give me
An awkward twinge. Stoop for it, honest Wilford;
There's a good lad!

Wilf. Right willingly, sir. [*Picks up the money.*]

Fitz. So!

The soldier and the justice save their blushes. —
Now carry it, I prithee, at your leisure,
To an old gossip, near the lodge here, — north
ward: —

I've heard of her — she's bed-ridden, and sick.
You need not say who sent you.

Wilf. I conceive.

'Tis private bounty; that's true charity.

Fitz. Nay, pish! — my charity! —

Wilf. Nay, I could swear

'Tis not the first time you have offer'd this
In secret.

Fitz. Um! — why, no! — not quite the first
But tell me, lad, how jogs the world here, eh?

In Rueful Castle? — What, some three months back
We two were cronies. What, hast thou forgot?
Thou wert my favourite here, man.

Wilf. Sir, you honour'd me
By saying so.

Fitz. Tut! honour'd! — tut — a fig!
Thou art grown starch, and sad. This air is catch-
ing;
Thou art infected. Harkye, Wilford, harkye!
Thou'rt a sly rogue! What, you could never tell
me

Of Helen's waiting maid; the little cherry; —
Of — plague upon her name! — of —

Wilf. Blanch, sir?

Fitz. Blanch:

That's she; — the forest fairy. — You and I
Must have some talk about her.

Wilf. Have you seen her?

Fitz. Just now: just gone. Od! I have blunder'd
horribly!

You must know, lad — come hither.

[They retire to the back of the scene.]

Enter SIR EDWARD MORTIMER.

Mort. Now for my brother, and — Ha! — Wil-
ford with him!

That imp is made my scourge. They whisper, too
Oh! I had rather court the thunder-bolt,
To melt my bones, and pound me to a mass,
Than suffer this vile canker to corrode me.
Wilford!

Wilf. Who calls? — eh? — 'tis Sir Edward.

Fitz. Mum!

Mort. I seem to interrupt you.

Wilf. *[Earnestly.]* No, indeed.

No, on my life, sir: — we were only talking
Of —

Fitz. Hold your tongue. Oons! boy, you must not tell.

Mort. Not!

Fitz. Not! no, to be sure: — why, 'tis a secret.

Wilf. You shall know all, sir. — 'Twas a trifle; nothing;

In faith, you shall know all.

Fitz. In faith, you lie.

Be satisfied, good Edward: 'tis a toy:

But, of all men, I would not have thee know on't;
It is a tender subject.

Mort. Aye, indeed!

Fitz. May not I have my secret? Oons! good brother,

What would you say, now, should a meddling knave

Busy his brains with matters, though but trivial,
Which concern you alone?

Mort. I'd have him rot:

Die piecemeal; pine; moulder in misery.

Agent, and sacrifice to Heaven's wrath,

When castigating plagues are hurl'd on man,

Stands lean, and lynx-eyed Curiosity,

Watching his neighbour's soul; — sleepless himself,

To banish sleep from others. Like a leech,

Sucking the blood-drops from a care-worn heart,

He gorges on't, — then renders up his food,

To nourish calumny, his foul-lung'd mate,

Who carries rumour's trumpet; and whose breath,

Infecting the wide surface of the world,

Strikes pestilence and blight. O, fie on't! fie!

Whip me the curious wretch from pole to pole!

Who writhes in fire, and scorches all around him,

A victim, making victims!

Fitz. By the mass,

'Twere a sound whipping that, from pole to pole!

From constable to constable might serve.

E'en you yourself were like to prove, but now,

This leech, that's yoke-fellow, you say, to scandal,
The bad-breath'd trumpeter.

Mort. Your pardon, brother;
I had forgot. Wilford, I've business for you.
Wait for me — aye — an hour after dinner,
Wait for me in the library.

Wilf. The library!
I sicken at the sound. [*Aside.*] Wait there for
you — and —
Captain Fitzharding, sir?

Mort. For me, alone.

Wilf. Alone, sir?

Mort. Yes; — begone.

Wilf. I shall, sir; — but,
If I have ever breath'd a syllable
That might displease you, may —
[*Aside to MORTIMER.*

Mort. Fool! breathe no more.

Wilf. I'm dumb.

I'd rather step into a lion's den
Than meet him in the library! — I go, sir. [*Exit.*

Fitz. Brother, you are too harsh with that poor
boy.

Mort. Brother, a man must rule his family
In his own way.

Fitz. Well, well, well; — don't be touchy.
I speak not to offend: I only speak
On a friend's privilege. The poor are men,
And have their feelings, brother.

Mort. So have I!

Fitz. One of the best that we can shew, believe me,
Is mildness to a servant. Servants, brother,
Are born with fortune's yoke about their necks;
And that is galling in itself enough;
We should not goad them under it. The master
Should rather cheer them in their servitude,
With kindly words — not too familiar neither;
But utter'd with that air which true benevolence
Imparts to dignified nobility.

Mort. Brother, your hand. You have a gentle nature;

May no mischance e'er ruffle it, my brother!

I've known thee from my infancy, old soldier;

And never did I know — I do not flatter —

A heart more stout, more cased with hardy manhood,

More full of milk within. Trust me, dear friend,

If admiration of thy charity

May argue charity in the admirer,

I am not destitute.

Fitz. You! — I have seen you
Sometimes o'erflow with it.

Mort. And what avails it?

Honour has been my theme; good-will to man

My study. I have labour'd for a name

As white as mountain snow; dazzling, and speckless:

Shame on't 'tis blurr'd with blots! Fate, like a mildew,

Ruins the virtuous harvest I would reap,

And all my crop is weeds.

Fitz. Why, how now, brother!

This is all spleen. You mope yourself too much,

In this dull forest, here. Twenty blue devils

Are dancing jigs, and hornpipes, in your brains.

Fie! fie! be more a man

Mort. Well, I have done.

Fitz. Come, what's for dinner? Od! I mean to eat
Abundantly.

Mort. I know not, brother. Honest Winterton
Will tell you all.

Fitz. What he! Old Adam? he!

My merry buck of Paradise? — Odso!

I have not seen him. Well, he shall produce

A flagon of the best; and, after dinner,

We will be jovial. Come, come, rouse you, man!

I came on purpose, thirty miles from home,

To jog your spirits. Prithee, now, be gay!
And, prithee, too, be kind to my young favourite!
To Wilford there.

Mort. Well, well; I hope I have been.

Fitz. No doubt, in actions:—but in words, and
looks.

A rugged look's a damper to a greenhorn.
I watch'd him, now, when you frown'd angrily,
And he betray'd ——

Mort. Betray'd!

Fitz. Ten thousand fears.

Mort. Oh!

Fitz. The poor devil couldn't shew more scared
Had you e'en held a pistol to his head.

[*MORTIMER starts.*

Why, hey-day! what's the matter?

Mort. Brother! ——

Question me not; my nerves are aspin-like;
The slightest breath will shake 'em. Come, good
brother!

Fitz. You'll promise to be gay?

Mort. I'll do my best.

Fitz. Why, that's well said! A man can do no
more.

Od! I believe my rattling talk has given you
A stir already.

Mort. That it has, indeed!

Come, brother!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

HELEN'S Cottage.

Enter HELEN and SAMSON.

Helen. Are you he that wish to enter in my
service?

Sam. Yes, so please you, Madam Helen, for want of a better.

Helen. Why, I have seen you in the forest — at Rawbold's cottage. He is your father, as I think.

Sam. Yes, so please you, Madam, for want of a better.

Helen. I fear me, you may well say that. Your father, as I have heard, bears an ill name in the forest.

Sam. Alas! Madam, he is obliged to bear it — for want of a better. We are all famish'd, Madam: and the naked, and hungry, have seldom many friends to speak well of them.

Helen. If I should hire thee, who will give thee a character?

Sam. My father, madam.

Helen. Why, sirrah, he has none of his own.

Sam. The more fatherly in him, Madam, to give his son what he has need of for himself. But a knave is often applied to, to vouch for a good servant's honesty. I will serve you as faithfully as your last footman; who, I have heard, ran away this morning.

Helen. Truly, he did so.

Sam. I was told on't, some half hour ago; and ran, hungrily, hither, to offer myself. So please you, let not poverty stand in the way of my preferment.

Helen. Should I entertain you, what could you do to make yourself useful?

Sam. Any thing. I can wire hares, snare partridges, shoot a buck, and smuggle brandy, for you, madam.

Helen. Fie on you, knave! 'Twere fitter to turn you over to the verderors of the forest, for punishment, than to encourage you in such practices.

Sam. I would practise any thing better, that might get me bread. I would scrape trenchers, fill:

buckets, and carry a message. What can a man do? — he can't starve.

Helen. Well, sirrah, to snatch thee from evil, I care not if I make a trial of thee.

Sam. No! will you?

Helen. Nineteen in twenty might question my prudence for this: — but, whatever loss I may suffer from thy roguery, the thought of having open'd a path, to lead a needy wanderer back to virtue, will more than repay me.

Sam. O, bless you, lady! If I do not prove virtuous, never trust in man more. I am overjoy'd!

Helen. Get thee to the kitchen. You will find a livery there will suit you.

Sam. A livery! O, the father! Virtuous and a livery, all in a few seconds! Heaven bless you!

Helen. Well, get you to your work.

Sam. I go, madam. If I break any thing to day, beseech you let it go for nothing; for joy makes my hand tremble. Should you want me, please to cry Samson, and I am with you in a twinkling. Heaven bless you! Here's fortune! [*Exit.*]

Helen. Blanch stays a tedious time. Heaven send Mortimer's health be not worse! He is sadly alter'd since we came to the forest. I dream'd, last night, of the fire he saved me from; and I saw him, all fresh, in manly bloom, bearing me through the flames, even as it once happened.

Enter BLANCH.

Helen. How now, wench? You have almost tired my patience.

Blanch. And my own legs, madam. If the old footman had not made so much use of his, by running away, they might have spared mine.

Helen. Inform me of Sir Edward Mortimer. Hast seen him?

Blanch. Yes, I have, madam.

Helen. Say; tell me;

How look'd he? how's his health? is he in spirits?

What said he, Blanch? Will he be here to-day?

Blanch. A little breath, madam, and I will answer all, duly.

Helen. O! fie upon thee, wench!

These interrogatories should be answer'd

Quicker than breath can utter them.

Blanch. That's impossible, lady.

Helen. Thou would'st not say so, hadst thou ever loved.

Love has a fleeter messenger than speech,

To tell love's meaning. His expresses post

Upon the orbs of vision, ere the tongue

Can shape them into words. A lover's look

Is his heart's Mercury. O! the eye's eloquence,

Twin-born with thought, outstrips the tardy voice,

Far swifter than the nimble lightning's flash

The sluggish thunder-peal that follows it.

Blanch. I am not skill'd in eye-talking, madam.

I have been used to let my discourse ride upon my tongue; and, I have been told, 'twill trot at a good round pace, upon occasion.

Helen. Then let it gallop, now, beseech you, wench,

And bring me news of Mortimer.

Blanch. Then, madam, I saw Sir Edward in his library; and deliver'd your letter. He will be here, either in the evening, or on the morrow, 'tis uncertain which;—for his brother, Captain Fitzharding, is arrived on a visit to him.

Helen. Is he?—well, that may somewhat raise his spirits.

That soldier has a pleasant, harmless mind;

Mirth gilds his age, and sits upon his brow,

Like sun in winter. I ne'er saw a man

More cheerful in decline; more laughter-loving,

More gay, and frolicksome.

Blanch. Frolicksome enough, if you knew all; but not so harmless. [Aside.

Helen. He'll scarce be here to-night.

Blanch. Who? Sir Edward? haply not, Madam: but his letter may chance to specify further particulars.

Helen. His letter Has he written? — fie upon thee.

Why didst not give it me, at once? Where is it? Thou art turn'd dreamer, wench! — Come; quickly.

Blanch. You talk'd to me so much of reading eyes, madam, that I e'en forgot the letter. Here it is.

Helen. Come to me, shortly, in my cabinet: I'll read it there. — I am almost unfit To open it. I ne'er receive his letters, But my hand trembles. Well, I know 'tis silly, And yet I cannot help it. I will ring; Then come to me, good Blanch; — not yet. My Mortimer,

Now for your letter! [Exit.

Blanch. I would they were wedded once, and all this trembling would be over. I am told your married lady's feelings are little roused in reading letters from a husband.

Enter SAMSON, dressed in a Livery.

Sam. This sudden turn of fortune might puff some men up with pride. I have look'd in the glass already: — and if ever man look'd braver in a glass than I, I know nothing of finery.

Blanch. Hey day! who have we here?

Sam. Oh, lord! this is the maid — I mean the waiting woman. I warrant we shall be rare company, in a long winter's evening.

Blanch. Why, who are you?

Sam. I'm your fellow-servant: — the new-comer. The last footman cast his skin in the pantry this morning, and I have crept into it.

dread of a fearful encounter is, often, as terrible as the encounter itself. Yet my encounters with him, of late, are no trifles. Some few hours back, in this very room, he held a loaded pistol within an inch of my brains. Well, that was passion; — he threw it from him on the instant, and — eh! — He's coming. — No. The old wainscot cracks, and frightens me out of my wits: and, I verily believe, the great folio dropt on my head, just now, from the shelf, on purpose to increase my terrors.

Enter SIR EDWARD MORTIMER, at one door of the Library, which he locks after him. WILFORD turns round on hearing him shut it.

Wilf. What's that? — 'Tis he himself! Mercy on me! he has lock'd the door! — What is going to become of me!

Mort. Wilford! — Is no one in the picture-gallery?

Wilf. No — not a soul, sir — not a human soul; —

None within hearing, if I were to bawl
Ever so loud.

Mort. Lock yonder door.

Wilf. The door, sir!

Mort. Do as I bid you.

Wilf. What, sir? lock —

I shall, sir. [*MORTIMER waves with his hand.*
[*Going to the door, and locking it.*

His face has little anger in it, neither: —

'Tis rather mark'd with sorrow and distress.

Mort. Wilford, approach me. — What am I so say
For aiming at your life? — Do you not scorn me,
Despise me for it?

Wilf. I! Oh, sir! —

Mort. You must;

For I am singled from the herd of men,
A vile, heart-broken wretch!

Wilf. Indeed, indeed, sir,
You deeply wrong yourself. Your equals' love,
The poor man's prayer, the orphan's tear of grati-
tude,

All follow you:—and I!—I owe you all!
I am most bound to bless you.

Mort. Mark me, Wilford:—
I know the value of the orphan's tear;
The poor man's prayer; respect from the respected;
I feel, to merit these, and to obtain them,
Is to taste here, below, that thrilling cordial
Which the remunerating angel draws
From the eternal fountain of delight,
To pour on blessed souls, that enter heaven.
I feel this:—I!—How must my nature, then,
Revolt at him who seeks to stain his hand
In human blood?—and yet it seems, this day,
I sought your life.—O! I have suffer'd madness!
None know my tortures;—pangs!—but I can end
them:

End them as far as appertains to thee.—
I have resolv'd it.—Hell-born struggles tear me!
But I have ponder'd on't,—and I must trust thee.

Wilf. Your confidence shall not be——

Mort. You must swear.

Wilf. Swear, sir!—will nothing but an oath,
then——

Mort. Listen.

May all the ills that wait on frail humanity
Be doubled on your head, if you disclose
My fatal secret! May your body turn
Most lazar-like, and loathsome; and your mind
More loathsome than your body! May those fiends
Who strangle babes, for very wantonness,
Shrink back, and shudder at your monstrous crimes,
And, shrinking, curse you! Palsies strike your
youth!

And the sharp terrors of a guilty mind

Poison your aged days ; while all your nights,
As on the earth you lay your houseless head,
Out-horror horror ! May you quit the world
Abhorr'd, self-hated, hopeless for the next,
Your life a burthen, and your death a fear !

Wilf. For mercy's sake, forbear ! you terrify me !

Mort. Hope this may fall upon thee ; — Swear
thou hopest it,
By every attribute which heaven, earth, hell,
Can lend, to bind, and strengthen conjuration,
If thou betray'st me.

Wilf. Well I ——— [*hesitating.*]

Mort. No retreating.

Wilf. [*After a pause.*]

I swear, by all the ties that bind a man,
Divine, or human, — never to divulge !

Mort. Remember you have sought this secret :

— Yes,

Extorted it. I have not thrust it on you.
'Tis big with danger to you ; and to me,
While I prepare to speak, torment unutterable.
Know, Wilford, that, ——— damnation !

Wilf. Dearest sir !

Collect yourself. This shakes you horribly.
You had this trembling, it is scarce a week,
At Madam Helen's.

Mort. There it is. — Her uncle —

Wilf. Her uncle !

Mort. Him. She knows it not ; — none know
it ; —

You are the first ordain'd to hear me say,
I am ——— his murderer.

Wilf. O, Heaven !

Mort. His assassin.

Wilf. What ! you that — mur — the murder —
I am choak'd !

Mort. Honour, thou blood-stain'd god ! at whose
red altar

Sit war and homicide, O, to what madness
Will insult drive thy votaries ! By Heaven !
In the world's range there does not breathe a man
Whose brutal nature I more strove to sooth,
With long forbearance, kindness, courtesy,
Than his who fell by me. But he disgraced me,
Stain'd me, — oh, death and shame ! — the world
look'd on,

And saw this sinewy savage strike me down ;
Rain blows upon me, drag me to and fro,
On the base earth, like carrion. Desperation,
In every fibre of my frame, cried vengeance !
I left the room, which he had quitted : chance,
(Curse on the chance !) while boiling with my
wrongs,

Thrust me against him, darkling, in the street : —
I stabb'd him to the heart : — and my oppressor
Roll'd, lifeless, at my foot.

Wilf. Oh ! mercy on me !

How could this deed be cover'd !

Mort. Would you think it ?

E'en at the moment when I gave the blow,
Butcher'd a fellow-creature in the dark,
I had all good men's love. But my disgrace,
And my opponent's death, thus link'd with it,
Demanded notice of the magistracy.

They summon'd me, as friend would summon friend,
To acts of import, and communication.

We met : and 'twas resolv'd, to stifle rumour,
To put me on my trial. No accuser,
No evidence appear'd, to urge it on : —

'Twas meant to clear my fame. — How clear it
then ?

How cover it ? you say. — Why, by a lie : —
Guilt's offspring, and its guard. I taught this breast,
Which truth, once, made her throne, to forge a lie ;
This tongue to utter it ; — rounded a tale,
Smooth as a seraph's song from Satan's mouth ;

So well compacted, that the o'er-throng'd court;
Disturb'd cool justice, in her judgment-seat,
By shouting "Innocence!" ere I had finish'd.
The court enlarged me; and the giddy rabble
Bore me, in triumph, home. Aye! — look upon
me. —

I know thy sight aches at me.

Wilf. Heaven forgive me!

I think I love you still: — but I am young;
I know not what to say: — it may be wrong; —
Indeed, I pity you.

Mort. I disdain all pity. —

I ask no consolation. Idle boy!
Think'st thou that this compulsive confidence
Was given to move thy pity? — Love of fame
(For still I cling to it) has urged me, thus,
To quash thy curious mischief in it's birth.
Hurt honour, in an evil, cursed hour,
Drove me to murder; — lying: — 'twould again.
My honesty, — sweet peace of mind, — all, all!
Are barter'd for a name. I will maintain it.
Should slander whisper o'er my sepulchre,
And my soul's agency survive in death,
I could embody it with Heaven's lightning,
And the hot shaft of my insulted spirit
Should strike the blaster of my memory
Dead, in the church-yard. Boy, I would not kill thee;
Thy rashness and discernment threaten'd danger;
To check them, there was no way left but this —
Save one; — your death: — you shall not be my
victim.

Wilf. My death! What, take my life! — My
life! to prop
This empty honour.

Mort. Empty? Grovelling fool!

Wilf. I am your servant, sir: child of your
bounty,
And know my obligation. I have been

Too curious haply ; 'tis the fault of youth.
I ne'er meant injury : if it would serve you,
I would lay down my life ; I'd give it freely :
Could you, then, have the heart to rob me of it ?
You could not — should not.

Mort. How !

Wilf. You dare not.

Mort. Dare not !

Wilf. Some hours ago you durst not. Passion
moved you ;
Reflection interposed, and held your arm.
But, should reflection prompt you to attempt it,
My innocence would give me strength to struggle,
And wrest the murderous weapon from your hand.
How would you look to find a peasant boy
Return the knife you levell'd at his heart ;
And ask you which in Heaven would show the best,
A rich man's honour, or a poor man's honesty ?

Mort. 'Tis plain I dare not take your life. To
spare it,
I have endanger'd mine. But dread my power ;
You know not it's extent. Be warn'd in time ;
Trifle not with my feelings. Listen, sir !
Myriads of engines, which my secret working
Can rouse to action, now encircle you.
I speak not vaguely. You have heard my prin-
ciple ;
Have heard, already, what it can effect :
Be cautious how you thwart it. Shun my brother ;
Your ruin hangs upon a thread : Provoke me,
And it shall fall upon you. Dare to make
The slightest movement to awake my fears,
And the gaunt criminal, naked, and stake-tied,
Left on the heath, to blister in the sun,
Till lingering death shall end his agony,
Compared to thee, shall seem more enviable
Than Cherubs to the damn'd.

Wilf. O, misery !

Discard me, sir! I must be hateful to you.
Banish me hence. I will be mute as death;
But let me quit your service.

Mort. Never. — Fool!

To buy this secret, you have sold yourself.
Your movements, eyes, and, most of all, your breath,
From this time forth, are fetter'd to my will.
You have said, truly: you are hateful to me: —
Yet you shall feel my bounty: — that shall flow,
And swell your fortunes; but my inmost soul
Will yearn with loathing when — hark! some one
knocks!

Open the door.

[*WILFORD opens the door, and WINTERTON comes in.*

Mort. How now, Winterton?

Did you knock more than once? Speak — did you listen —

— I mean, good Adam, did you wait? — Aye, wait
Long at the door, here?

Wint. Bless your honour! no.

You are too good to let the old man wait.

Mort. What, then, our talk; here — Wilford's
here and mine —

Did not detain you at the door? — Ha! — did it?

Wint. Not half a second.

Mort. Oh! — well, what's the matter?

Wint. Captain Fitzharding, sir, entreats your
company.

I've placed another flagon on the table.

Your worship knows it — Number thirty-five: —
The supernaculum.

Mort. Well, well — I come.

What, has he been alone?

Wint. No — I've been with him.

Od! he's a merry man! and does so jest!

He calls me first of men, 'cause my name's Adam.
Well! 'tis exceeding pleasant, by St. Thomas!

Mort. Come, Adam, I'll attend the Captain.
— Wilford,

What I have just now given you in charge,
Be sure to keep fast lock'd. I shall be angry, —
Be very angry, if I find you careless.
Follow me, Adam.

[*Exit MORTIMER — WINTERTON following.*

Wilf. This house is no house for me. Fly I will,
I am resolved: — but whither? His threats strike
terror into me; and, were I to reach the pole, I
doubt whether I should elude his grasp. But to
live here a slave! slave to his fears, his jealousies!
— Night is coming on. Darkness be my friend!
for I will forth instantly. The thought of my in-
nocence will cheer me, as I wander through the
gloom. Oh! when guilty Ambition writhes upon
its couch, why should bare-foot Integrity repine,
though its sweet sleep be canopied with a ragged
hovel! [*Exit.*

SCENE V.

The inside of an Abbey, in ruins: part of it converted into an habitation for Robbers. Various entrances to their apartment, through the broken arches of the building, &c. &c.

Enter JUDITH, and a Boy.

Jud. Well, sirrah! have you been upon the scout? Are any of our gang returning?

Boy. No, Judith! not a soul.

Jud. The rogues tarry thus, to fret me.

Boy. Why, indeed, Judith, the credit of your

cooking is lost among thieves. They never come punctual to their meals.

Jud. No tiding of Orson yet, from the market-town?

Boy. I have seen nothing of him.

Jud. Brat! thou dost never bring me good news.

Boy. Judith, you are ever so cross with me!

Jud. That wretch Orson slights my love of late. Hence, you hemp-seed, hence! Get to the broken porch of the abbey, and watch. 'Tis all you are good for.

Boy. You know I am but young yet, Judith! but, with good instructions, I may be a robber, in time.

Jud. Away, you imp! you will never reach such preferment. [*A whistle without.*] So! I hear some of our party.

[*Whistle again; the boy puts his fingers in his mouth, and whistles, in answer.*]

Jud. Why must you keep your noise, sirrah?

Boy. Nay, Judith, 'tis one of the first steps we boys learn in the profession, I shall never come to good, if you check me so. Huzza! here come two!

Enter two ROBBERS, through the broken part of the scene.

Jud. So! you have found your road, at last. A murrain light upon you! is it thus you keep your hours?

1st Rob. What, hag, ever at this trade! Ever grumbling?

Jud. I have reason. I toil to no credit; I watch with no thanks. I trim up the table, for your return, and no one returns, in due time, to notice my industry. Your meat is scorch'd to cinders. Rogues, would it were poison for you!

2d Rob. How the fury raves! Here, take my carbine; 'twas levell'd, some half hour since, at a traveller's head.

Jud. Hah, hah, hah! Rare! Didst shoot him?

1st Rob. Shoot him? No. This devil in petticoats thinks no more of slaying a man than killing a cock-chafer. I never knew a woman turn to mischief, that she did not undo a man, clean.

Jud. Did any of you meet Orson, on your way?

1st Rob. Aye, there the hand points. When that fellow is abroad, you are more savage than customary; and that is needless.

2d Rob. None of our comrades come yet? They will be finely soak'd.

1st Rob. Aye, the rain pours, like a spout, upon the ruins of the old abbey-wall, here.

Jud. I'm glad on't. May it drench them, and breed agues! 'twill teach them to keep time.

1st Rob. Peace, thou abominable railer! A man had better dwell in purgatory, than have thee in his habitation. — Peace, devil! or I'll make thee repent.

Jud. You! 'tis as much as thy life is worth to move my spleen.

1st Rob. What, you will set Orson, your champion, upon me?

Jud. Coward! he should not disgrace himself with chastising thee.

1st Rob. Death and thunder! —

[*Draws his sword.*]

Jud. Aye, attack a woman, do! it suits your hen-hearted valour. Assault a woman!

1st Rob. Well — passion hurried me. But I have a respect for the soft sex, and am cool again. [*Returns his sword to the scabbard.*] Come, Judith, be friends. — Nay, come, do; and I will give thee a farthingale, I took from a lawyer's widow.

Jud. Where is it?

1st Rob. You shall have it.

Jud. Well — I ——— Hark!

2d Rob. Soft! I think I hear the foot of a comrade.

MUSICAL DIALOGUE, AND CHORUS.

ROBBERS and JUDITH.

*Listen! No; it is the owl,
That hoots upon the mould'ring tow'r.
Hark! the rain beats, the night is foul;
Our comrades stay beyond their hour.*

Listen!

*All's hush'd around the abbey-wall —
Soft! Now I hear a robber's call!*

Listen!

*They whistle! — Answer it! — 'Tis nigh!
Again! A comrade comes. — 'Tis I!*

And here another; and here another!

Who comes? A brother. Who comes?

A brother.

Now they all come pouring in;

Our jollity will soon begin.

Sturdy partners, all appear!

We're here! and here, and here, and here!

Thus we stout freebooters prowl,

Then meet to drain the flowing bowl.

[*At different periods of the Music, the Robbers enter through various parts of the ruins, in groups.*]

Enter ORSON, with luggage on his back, as return'd from Market.

1st Rob. See ; hither comes Orson, at last. He walks in, like Plenty, with provision on his shoulder.

Jud. O, Orson! — why didst tarry, Orson? I began to fear. Thou art cold and damp. Let me wring the wet from thy clothes. O! my heart leaps to see thee.

1st Rob. Mark how this she-bear hugs her bruin!

Ors. Stand off! this hamper has been wearisome enough. I want not thee on my neck.

Jud. Villain! 'tis thus you ever use me. I can revenge: — I can — do not, dear Orson! do not treat me thus.

Ors. Let a man be ever so sweet-temper'd, he will meet somewhat to sour him. I have been vex'd to madness.

2d Rob. How now, Orson, what has vex'd thee, now?

Ors. A prize has slipt through my fingers.

3d Rob. Aye! marry, how?

Ors. I met a straggling knave on foot, and the rogue resisted. He had the face to tell me that he was thrust on the world to seek his fortune; and that the little he had about him was his all. Plague on the provision at my back! I had no time to rifle him: — but I have spoil'd him for fortune-seeking, I warrant him.

Rob. How?

Ors. Why I beat him to the ground. Whether he will ever get up again, the next passenger may discover.

Jud. Ha! Ha! O, brave! That's my valiant Orson!

3d Rob. Orson, you are ever disobeying our

Captain's order. You are too remorseless and bloody.

Ors. Take heed, then, how you move my anger, by telling me on't. The affair is mine; I will answer to the consequence.

4th Rob. I hear our Captain's signal. Here he comes. Ha!—he is leading one who seems wounded.

Enter ARMSTRONG, supporting WILFORD.

Arm. Gently, good fellow! come, keep a good heart!

Wilf. You are very kind. I had breathed my last, but for your care. Whither have you led me?

4th Rob. Where you will be well treated, youngster. You are now among as honourable a knot of men as ever cried "Stand" to a traveller.

Wilf. How! among robbers!

4th Rob. Why, so the law's cant calls us gentlemen who live at large.

Wilf. So! For what am I reserved?

Arm. Fear nothing. You are safe in this asylum. Judith, lead him in. See some of my linen ready, and look to his wound.

Jud. I do not like the office. You are ever at these tricks. 'Twill ruin us in the end. What have we to do with charity?

Arm. Turbulent wretch! obey me.

Jud. Well, I shall. Come, fellow, since it must be so.

Arm. Anon, I'll visit you myself, lad.

Wilf. Heaven bless you! whate'er becomes of my life—and, faith, I am almost weary on't—I am bound to your charity. Gently, I pray you;—my wound pains.—Gently!

[Exit, led out by JUDITH]

Arm. I would I knew which of you had done this.

1st Rob. Why what's the matter, Captain?

Arm. Cruelty is the matter. Had not accident led me to the spot where he lay, yon poor boy had bled to death. I learned his story, partly, from him, on the way: and know how basely he has been handled, by one of you. Well, time must discover him: for he, who had brutality enough to commit the action, can scarcely have courage enough to confess it.

Ors. Courage, Captain, is a quality, I take it, little wanted by any here. What signify words; — I did it.

Arm. I suspected thee, Orson. 'Tis scarce an hour since he, whom thou hast wounded, quitted the service of Sir Edward Mortimer, in the forest, here; and inquiry will doubtless be made.

2d Rob. Nay, then we are all discover'd.

Arm. Now, mark what thou hast done. Thou hast endanger'd the safety of our party; thou hast broken my order ('tis not the first time, by many,) in attacking a passenger: — and what passenger? One whose unhappy case should have claim'd thy pity. He told you he had displeased his master, — left the house of comfort, and, with his scanty pittance, was wandering round the world to mend his fortune. Like a butcher, you struck the forlorn boy to the earth, and left him to languish in the forest. Would any of our brave comrades have done this?

All. — None! None!

Arm. Comrades, in this case, my voice is single. But, if it have any weight, this brute, this Orson, shall be thrust from our community, which he has disgraced. Let it not be said, brothers, while want

drives us to plunder, that wantonness prompts us to butchery.

Robbers. O brave Captain! away with him!

Ors. You had better ponder on't, ere you provoke me,

Arm. Rascal! do you mutter threats? You cannot terrify us. Our calling teems with danger; — we are not to be daunted by the treachery of an informer. We defy you. Go. You dare not hurt us. You dare not sacrifice so many brave and gallant fellows to your revenge, and proclaim yourself scoundrel. Begone.

Ors. Well, if I must, I must. I was always a friend to you all: but, if you are bent on turning me out, — why — fare you well.

Robbers. Aye, aye — Away, Away!

Ors. Farewell, then.

[*Exit.*

Arm. Come, comrades! think no more of this. Let us drown the choler we have felt, in wine and revelry.

FINALE.

*Solly Friars tipped here,
Ere these Abbey-walls had crumbled;
Still the ruins boast good cheer,
Though long ago the cloisters tumbled.*

The Monks are gone! —

Well! well!

That's all one: —

Let's ring their knell.

Ding dong! ding dong! to the bald-pated monk!

He set the example.

We'll follow his sample,

And all go to bed most religiously drunk.

*Peace to the good fat Friar's soul,
Who, every day,
Did wet his clay,
In the deep capacious bowl.
Huzza ! Huzza ! we'll drink and we'll sing !
We'll laugh, and we'll quaff,
And make the welkin ring !*

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I.

*WINTERTON'S Room, in Sir EDWARD MORTIMER'S
Lodge*

*SAMSON and BLANCH discovered at a Table, with
bottles and glasses.*

Blanch. Samson, you must drink no more.

Sam. One more glass, Mistress Blanch, and I shall be better company. 'Twill make me loving.

Blanch. Nay, then, you shall not have a drop.

Sam. I will : — and so shall you too. [*Filling the glass.*] Who knows but it may make you the same.

Blanch. You are wond'rous familiar, Mr. Lout.

Sam. I would not willingly offend. I will endeavour at more respect. My humble duty to you, [*Drinks.*]

Blanch. I would counsel you to be cautious of drinking, Samson. Consider where you are. We

are now, remember, in Sir Edward Mortimer's Lodge.

Sam. In the Butler's room ; — where drinking has, always, a privilege. [Fills.

Blanch. What, another !

Sam. Do not fear. 'Twill not make me familiar again. My lowly respects to you. [*Drinks.*] This same old Winterton's wine has a marvellous choice flavour. I wonder whether 'twas smuggled.

Blanch. Should you totter with this, now, in the morning, 'twould go nigh to shake your office to the foundation, before night. My lady would never pardon you.

Sam. 'Twould be hard to turn me adrift, for getting drunk, on the second day of my service.

Blanch. Truly, I think 'twould be reason sufficient.

Sam. 'Twould not be giving a man a fair trial. How should she know but I intend to be sober for a year after ?

Blanch. How should she know, indeed ! or any one else, who has heard of your former rogueries.

Sam. Well, the worst fault I had was being a sportsman.

Blanch. A sportsman ! out on you, rogue ! you were a poacher.

Sam. Aye, so the rich nick-name us poor brothers of the field ; and lay us by the heels, when we do that for hunger which they practise for amusement. Cannot I move you to take a thimble-full, this cold morning ?

Blanch. Not a drop, I !

Sam. Hark ! I think I hear old Winterton coming back. By our lady, Mistress Blanch, we have made a desperate hole in the bottle, since he left us.

Blanch. We ! why, you slanderous rogue, I have not tasted it.

Sam. No — 'tis not he.

Blanch. No matter ; he will be back on the instant. Leave this idle guzzling, if you have any shame. Think we are attending Madam Helen, in her visit to Sir Edward, on his sudden sickness. Think, too, on the confusion from Wilford's flight. Is it a time for you, sot, to tittle, when the whole house is in distress, and melancholy ?

Sam. Alas ! I have too tender a heart, Mistress Blanch ; and have need of somewhat, in the midst of this sorrow, to cheer my spirits.

Blanch. This wine will, shortly, give your professions of amendment the lie.

Sam. Let it give me the lie ; 'Tis an affront I can easily swallow. Come, a bargain ; — an you will take one glass with me, I will give over.

Blanch. Well, on that condition —

Sam. Agreed ; for that will just finish the bottle. [*Fills.*] I will drink no health, now, but of thy giving.

Blanch. Then listen, and edify. — May a man never insult a woman with his company, when drunkenness has made him a brute.

Sam. With all my heart : — but a woman knows, that man may be made a brute, when wine is clean out of the question. Eh ! Here comes the old man, in real earnest.

Enter ADAM WINTERTON.

Wint. Well, I am here again. — What, madcap ! — In truth, I have a world of care. Our good master taken ill, on the sudden ; — Wilford flown : — a base, ungrateful boy ! — one that I was so fond of : — and to prove such a profligate ! I began to love the young villain, like my own child. I had mark'd down the unfortunate boy, in my last testament : I had — Bless me ! my cold is wond'rous

troublesome to my eyes, this morning. Ah! 'tis a wicked world! — but old Winterton keeps a merry heart, still. Do I not, pretty Mistress Blanch?

Blanch. I hope you do, Adam.

Wint. Nay, on second thought, I do *not* keep it; for thou hast stolen it from me, tulip! — ha! good i'faith.

Sam. Ha! ha! — Well i'faith that is a good jest! ha! ha!

Wint. Dost think so, varlet? "Thou hast stolen it from me, tulip!" Well, it was — it was exceeding pleasant, by St. Thomas! Heigho! I must e'en take a glass to console me. One cup to — eh! mercy on me! why the liquor has flown. Ha! the bottle has leak'd, haply.

Sam. Yes, sir: — I crack'd that bottle, myself, in your absence.

Wint. Crack'd! Why, what a careless goose art thou! these unthrifty knaves! — ah! times are sadly changed, for the worse, since I was a boy.

Blanch. Dost think so, Adam?

Wint. Question any man of my age, and he will say the same. Domestic never broke bottles in queen Elizabeth's time. Servants were better then; — aye, marry, and the bottles were better bottles. 'Tis a degenerate world! Well; heigho!

Blanch. Why dost sigh thus, Adam?

Wint. In truth, this is a heavy day for me!

Blanch. I hope not, Adam. Come, come, things are not so bad, I warrant thee. You have long drank, smilingly, of the cup of life, Adam; and, when a good man takes his potion without murmuring, Providence seldom leaves the bitterest drop at the bottom. What is the matter, Adam?

Wint. Alas! nothing but evil. These attacks come on our worthy master as thick as hail, and weaken him daily. He has been grievous ill, in the

night, poor soul; and ne'er slept a wink since I brought him the news.

Blanch. What news, good Adam?

Wint. Why, of Wilford's flight.— A reprobate! The shock of his baseness has brought on Sir Edward's old symptoms.

Blanch. What call you his old symptoms?

Wint. The shiverings, and trembling fits, which have troubled him these two years. I begin to think the air of this forest doth nourish agues. I can never move him to drink enough of canary. I think, in my conscience, I had been aguish myself, in these woods, had I not drank plenty of canary.

Sam. Mass, when I am ill, this old boy shall be my apothecary.

[*Aside.*

Blanch. Well, well, he may mend. Do not fancy the worst, ere worst arrives, Adam.

Wint. Nay, worse has arrived, already.

Blanch. Aye! marry, how?

Wint. Wilford's villainy. Sir Edward says, he has proofs of the blackest treachery against him.

Blanch. Indeed!

Wint. It chills my old blood to think on't! I had mark'd out the boy, as a boy of promise; a learned boy! He had the backs of all the books in our library by heart: and now a hue and cry is after him. Mercy on me! if the wretched lad be taken, Sir Edward will bring him to the charge. We none know what 'tis yet; but time will show.

Blanch. You surprise me! Wilford turn dishonest! I could scarce have credited this; and after two years' trial, too!

Sam. O, monstrous! to turn rogue after two years' trial! Had it happen'd after two days, indeed, 'twere not to be wonder'd at.

Enter a SERVANT.

Serv. Mr. Winterton, there is a young woman of the forest would speak with you.

Wint. Out on't! These cottagers time their business vilely. Well, bid her come in, Simon.

Serv. And, Mistress Blanch, your lady would see you anon, in the breakfast-parlour. [*Exit.*

Blanch. I come quickly. Be not cast down, now, Adam; keep thy old heart merry still.

Wint. Ha! in truth, I know not well, now, what would mend my spirits.

Blanch. What think you of the kiss I promised?

Wint. Ah, wag! go thy way. Od! thou hast nimble legs. Had I o'ertaken thee, yesterday — Ah! well, no matter.

Blanch. Come, I will not leave thee comfortless, in these sad times. Here; — here is my hand, Adam.

Wint. Thou wilt show me a light pair of heels, again, now.

Blanch. No, in faith. Come; 'tis more than I would offer to every one. Take it.

Wint. That I will, most willingly.

[*Kisses her hand.*

Blanch. Do not play the rake now, and boast of my favours; for I am told there is a breed of puppies will build stories to a simple girl's prejudice, on slighter encouragement than this. Be not you one of those empty coxcombs, and so adieu, Adam.

[*Exit.*

Wint. Nay, I was never given to vaunt. 'Sbud! if I had, many a tale had been told, sixty years back, of young, lusty Adam Winterton. — Eh! why what dost thou titter at, scapegrace?

Sam. I, sir? — Not I. [*Smothering a laugh.*

Wint. I had forgot this varlet. Pestilence on't!

Should this knave prate of my little gallantry, I tremble for the good name of poor Mistress Blanch.

Enter BARBARA.

Barb. May I come in, good your worship?

Wint. Aye, marry, that thou may'st, pretty one. — Well, though many things have declined since I was a boy, female beauty keeps its rank still. I do think there be more pretty women, now, than there were in Queen Elizabeth's reign.

Sam. Flesh! this is our Barbara. [*Aside.*

Wint. Well, and what wouldst have, sweet one, with old Adam? — Eh! by St. Thomas, why thou art she I have seen, ere now, with Wilford.

Barb. Beseech you, tell me where he is, sir.

Wint. Alas, child, he's gone; — flown! Eh! what! — why, art not well, child?

Barb. Nothing, sir; — I only — I hoped he would have call'd at our cottage, ere he quitted the forest. Is there no hope that he may come back, sir?

Wint. None, truly; except force bring him back. Alas, child, the boy has turn'd out naught; and justice is dogging him at the heels.

Barb. What Wilford, sir! — my poor — O, sir, my heart is bursting! I pray you, pardon me. Had he pass'd our cottage in his flight, I would have ran out, and follow'd him all the world over.

Wint. To see what love will do! Just so did Jane Blackthorn take on for me, when Sir Marmaduke carried me to London, in the hard winter.

Barb. Beseech you, forgive me, sir! I only came to make inquiry, for I had heard a strange tale. I would not have my sorrows make me troublesome to your worship.

Wint. To me? poor wench! nay, that thou art

not. I trust, child, I ne'er turn'd a deaf ear, yet, to the unfortunate. 'Tis man's office to listen to the sorrows of a woman, and do all he can to sooth them. Come, come, dry thy tears, chicken!

Barb. I look'd to have been his wife, shortly, sir. He was as kind a youth — and, I am sure, he wanted not gratitude. I have heard him talk of you, as you were his father, sir.

Wint. Did he? Ah! poor lad. Well, he had good qualities; but, alas! he is now a reprobate, poor boy! To think, now, that he should speak kindly of the old man behind his back!

Barb. Alas, this is the second flight, to bring unhappiness to our poor family!

Wint. The second! How do'st mean, wench?

Barb. My brother, sir, left our cottage, suddenly, yesterday morning; and we have no tidings of him since.

Sam. Lo you, now, where he stands, to glad the hearts of his disconsolate relations! Sister Barbara, why dost not know me?

Barb. Eh! No; — sure it can't — Brother Samson?

Sam. Mr. Samson; — Head serving-man to the Lady Helen, of the New Forest.

Barb. O, the fortune! can it be! what gain'd thee so good a place, Samson?

Sam. Merit. I had no interest to back me. Mine is a rare case; I was promoted on the score of my virtues.

Wint. Out upon thee! thy knaveries have been the talk of the whole forest; and furnish'd daily food for conversation.

Sam. Truly, then, conversation has fared better upon them than I. But my old character is laid aside, with my old jerkin. I am now exalted.

Wint. An I have any forecast, in destiny, friend, thou bidst fair, one day, to be more exalted. — Ha!

good i'faith. — Come, you must to the kitchen, knave. I must thither myself, to give order for the day.

Barb. Must I return home, then, your worship, with no tidings?

Wint. Ah! Heaven help me! what havoc doth wanton Cupid make with us all! Well, tarry about the house with thy brother; we may hear somewhat, haply, anon. Take care of thy sister, knave; and mark what I had said to thee: — “Thou bidst fair one day to be more exalted.” Ha! well, it was exceeding pleasant, by St. Thomas! *[Exit.*

Sam. Well, Barbara, and how fares father?

Barb. He has done nought but chide, since you disappear'd, Samson. It has sour'd him with us all.

Sam. Well, I will call soon, and set all even.

Barb. Will you, brother?

Sam. I will. Bid him not be cast down. I will protect the Rawbold family.

Barb. Truly, brother, we are much in need of protection.

Sam. Do not fear. Lean upon my power. I am head of all the male domestics at Madam Helen's.

Barb. O, the father! — of all! and how many be there, brother?

Sam. Why, truly, not so many as there be at the Lodge, here. But I have a boy under me, to chop wood, and draw water.

Barb. The money we had, from Sir Edward's bounty, is nearly gone, in payment of the debt our father owed. You know he had, shortly, been imprison'd else.

Sam. My stock is somewhat low, too: — but no matter. Keep a good heart. I am now a rising man. I will make you all comfortable.

Barb. Heaven bless you, Samson !

Sam. In three months, I look for a quarter's wages ; and then Dick shall have a shirt. I must, now, take you roundly to task.

Barb. Me, brother !

Sam. Aye, marry. You would throw yourself away on this Wilford ;— who, as the story goes, is little better than the devil's own imp.

Barb. O, brother ! be not so uncharitable. I know not what is against him, but he has not been heard, yet. Consider, too, were all our actions, at home, to be sifted, I fear me, we might not escape blameless.

Sam. Aye, but he, it seems, is falling, and we are upon the rise ; and that makes all the difference. Mass ! how gingerly men will sift the faults of those who are getting up hill in the world ; and what a rough shake they give those who are going downward !

Barb. I would not be one of those sifters, brother.

Sam. No, — I warrant, now, thou wouldst marry this vagabond.

Barb. That I would, brother. He has cheer'd me in my distress, and I would sooner die than leave him, now he is unfortunate.

Sam. Hast thou no respect for the family ? Thou wilt bring endless disgrace on the name of Rawbold. Shame on you, to take away from our reputation, when we have so little !

Barb. I thought, brother, you would have shown more pity for your poor sister.

Sam. Tush ! Love's a mere vapour

Barb. Ah ! brother !

DUET.—SAMSON and BARBARA.

I.

Barb. *From break of the morning, were I with my love,
I'd talk till the evening drew nigh;
And, when the day did close,
I'd sing him to repose,
And tune my love a lullaby.*

II.

Sam. *From break of the morning, were I with my love,
O! long ere the evening drew nigh,
Her talk would make me doze,
Till the music of my nose
Would play my love a lullaby.*

III.

Barb. *Our children around us, I'd look on my love,
Each moment in rapture would fly.*
Sam. *But love is apt to pall,
When the brats begin to squall,
And a wife is screaming lullaby.*
Both. *From break of the morning, &c. [Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A Room in SIR EDWARD MORTIMER's Lodge.

MORTIMER and HELEN discover'd.

Helen. Sooth, you look better now; indeed you do.

Mort. Thou'rt a sweet flatterer!

Helen. Ne'er trust me, then,

If I do flatter. This is wilfulness. —

Thou wilt be sick, because thou wilt be sick.

I'll laugh away this fancy, Mortimer.

Mort. What couldst thou do, to laugh away my sickness?

Helen. I'll mimic the physician,—wise and dull,—
With cane at nose, and nod emphatical,
Portentous in my silence; feel your pulse,
With an owl's face, that shall express as much
As Galen's head, cut out in wood, and gilt,
Stuck over an apothecary's door.

Mort. And what wouldst thou prescribe?

Helen. I would distil
Each flower that lavish happiness produced,
Through the world's paradise, ere disobedience
Scatter'd the seeds of care; then mingle each,
In one huge cup of comfort for thee, love,
To chase away thy dulness. Thou shouldst wanton
Upon the wings of Time, and mock his flight,
As he sail'd with thee tow'rd eternity.
I'd have each hour, each minute of thy life,
A golden holiday; and should a cloud
O'ercast thee, be it light as gossamer,
That Helen might disperse it with her breath,
And talk thee into sunshine!

Mort. Sweet, sweet Helen!

Death, soften'd with thy voice, might dull his sting,
And steep his darts in balsam. Oh! my Helen,
These warnings which that grisly monarch sends,
Forerunners of his certain visitation,
Of late, are frequent with me. It should seem
I was not meant to live long.

Helen. Mortimer!

My Mortimer! You —— Oh! for Heaven's sake,
Do not talk thus! You chill me. You are well;
Very well. — You give way. — Oh, Mortimer!
Banish these fantasies. Think on poor Helen!

Mort. Think on thee, Helen?

Helen. Aye; but not think thus.
You said, my Mortimer, my voice could soothe,
In the most trying struggle.

Mort. Said I so?

Yet, Helen, when my fancy paints a death-bed,
I ever place thee foremost in the scene,
To make the picture touching. After man
Is summon'd, and has made up his account,
Oh! 'tis a bitter after-reck'ning, when
His pallid lips receive the last sad kiss,
Fond, female anguish prints! Then, Helen, then, —
Then comes man's agony! To leave the object
He shelter'd in his heart grief-struck and help-
less!

To grasp her hand; to fix his hollow eye
Upon her face, and mark her mute despair,
'Till the last flutter of his aching spirit
Hurries him hence, for ever!

Helen. Oh! for pity! —

What have I done, that you — [*bursts into tears.*

Mort. My Helen!

Helen. I did not mean to weep. Oh, Mortimer,
I could not talk so cruelly to you!
I would not pain you, thus, for worlds!

Mort. Nay, come;

I meant not this. I did not mean to say
There's danger now; but 'tis the privilege
Of sickness to be grave, and moralize
On that which sickness brings. I pr'ythee, now,
Be comforted. Believe me, I shall mend;
I feel I shall, already.

Helen. Do you, Mortimer?

Do you, indeed, feel so?

Mort. Indeed I do.

Helen. I knew you would:— I said it. Did I not?
I am so glad! You must be cautious now.
I'll play the nurse to-day; and then to-morrow
You shall not brood at home, as you are wont;
But we will ride together through the forest.
You must have exercise. Oh! I will make you
Fresh as the summer dew-drop, and as healthy

As ruddy labour, springing from his bed,
To carol o'er the fallow!

Mort. Dearest prattler!

Men would meet sickness with a smiling welcome,
Were all woo'd back to health thus prettily.

Helen. I see it in your looks, now, you are better.

Mort. Scarce possible, so suddenly!

Helen. O, yes;

There is no little movement of your face
But I can mark, on the instant; — 'tis my study.
I have so gazed upon it, that I think
I can interpret ev'ry turn it has,
And read your inmost soul.

Mort. What?

Helen. Mercy on me,
You change again.

Mort. 'Twas nothing. Do not fear;
These little shocks are usual. — 'Twill not last.

Helen. Would you could shake them off!

Mort. I would I could!

Helen. Resolve it, then; and the bare resolution
Will bring the remedy. Rally your spirits;
I prythee, now, endeavour. — This young man,
This boy — this Wilford — he has been ungrateful;
But do not let his baseness wear you thus.
Ev'n let him go.

Mort. I'll hunt him through the world!

Helen. Why, look you there, now! Pray be calm.

Mort. Well, well;

I am too boisterous: 'Tis my unhappiness
To seem most harsh where I would show most kind.
The world has made me peevish. — This same boy
Has somewhat moved me.

Helen. He's beneath your care.

Seek him not now, to punish him. Poor wretch!
He carries that away, within his breast,
Which will embitter all his life to come,
And make him curse the knowledge on't.

Mort. The knowledge! —
Has he, then, breathed? — Carries within his
breast!

What does he know?

Helen. His own ingratitude.

Mort. O, — very true.

Helen. Then leave him to his conscience.
It is a scorpion, sent by Heaven itself,
To fix on hidden crimes; a slow, still stream,
Of molten lead, kept dropping on the heart,
To scald, and weigh it down. Believe me, love,
There is no earthly punishment so great,
To scourge an evil act, as man's own conscience,
To tell him he is guilty.

Mort. 'Tis a hell!

I pray you talk no more on't. — I am weak; —
I did not sleep last night.

Helen. Would you sleep now?

Mort. No, Helen, no. I tire thy patient sweet-
ness.

Helen. Tire me! nay, that you do not. You
forget
How often I have sat by you, and watch'd,
Fanning the busy summer-flies away,
Lest they should break your slumbers. Who comes
here?

Enter WINTERTON.

What, Winterton! How dost thou, old acquaint-
ance?

How do'st thou, Adam?

Wint. Bless your goodness, well.

Is my good master better?

Helen. Somewhat, Adam.

Wint. Now, by our Lady, I rejoice to hear it!
I have a message —

Helen. O, no business now!

Wint. Nay, so I said. Quoth I, his honour's sick ;
Perilous sick ! but the rogue press'd, and press'd ;
I could refuse no longer. Out upon them !
The varlets know old Winterton's good nature.
'Tis my weak side.

Helen. Who has thus importuned you ?

Wint. To say the truth, a most ill-favour'd varlet.
But he will speak to none but to his worship.
I think 'tis forest business.

Mort. O, not now :
Another time ; — to-morrow ; — when he will.
I am unfit. — They tease me !

Wint. Ev'n as you please, your worship. I
should think,
From what he dropt, he can give some account
Of the poor boy.

Mort. Of Wilford ? [Starting up.]

Wint. Troth, I think so.
The knave is shy ; but Adam has a head.

Mort. Quick ; send him hither on the instant !
Haste !

Fly, Adam, fly !

Wint. Well, now, it glads my heart
To hear you speak so briskly.

Mort. Well, despatch !

Wint. I go. Heaven bless you both ! Heaven
send you well,
And merry days may come again. [Exit.]

Helen. I fear this business may distract you,
Mortimer :
I would you would defer it till to-morrow.

Mort. Not so, sweet. Do not fear. I pr'ythee,
now,
Let me have way in this. Retire awhile ;
Anon, I'll come to thee.

Helen. Pray, now, be careful.
I dread these agitations. Pray, keep calm,
Now do not tarry long. Adieu, my Mortimer !

Mort. Farewell, awhile, sweet!

Helen. Since it must be so, —

Farewell!

[*Exit HELEN.*]

Mort. Dear, simple innocence! thy words of comfort

Pour oil upon my fires. Methought her eye,
When first she spake of conscience, shot a glance
Like her dead uncle on me. Well, for Wilford!
That slave can play the Parthian with my fame,
And wound it while he flies. Bring him before me,
Place me the runagate within my gripe,
And I will plant my honour on its base,
Firmer than adamant, though hell and death
Should moat the work with blood! — Oh, how will
sin

Engender sin! Throw guilt upon the soul,
And, like a rock dash'd on the troubled lake,
'Twill form its circles, round succeeding round,
Each wider than the —

Enter ORSON.

How now! What's your business?

Ors. Part with your office in the forest: part
Concerns yourself in private.

Mort. How myself?

Ors. Touching a servant of your house; a lad,
Whose heels, I find, were nimbler than his duty.

Mort. Speak; what of him? Quick; — Know
you where he is?

Canst bring me to him?

Ors. To the very spot.

Mort. Do it.

Ors. Nay, softly.

Mort. I'll reward you — amply; —
Ensure your fortunes.

Ors. First ensure my neck.

'Twill do me little good, else. I've no heirs;

And, when I die, 'tis like the law will bury me,
At its own charge.

Mort. Be brief, and to your purpose.

Ors. Then, to the business which concerns your
office,

Here, in the forest.

Mort. Nay, of that anon.

First of my servant.

Ors. Well, ev'n as you please.

'Tis no rare thing ; let public duty wait,
Till private interests are settled. But
My story is a chain. Take all together ;
'Twill not unlink.

Mort. Be quick then. While we talk,
This slave escapes me.

Ors. Little fear of that.

He's in no plight to journey far, to-day.

Mort. Where is he hid ?

Ors. Hard by ; with robbers.

Mort. Robbers ! —

Well, I'm glad on't. 'Twill suit my purpose best.

[*Aside.*

— What, has he turn'd to plunder ?

Ors. No ; not so.

Plunder has turn'd to him. He was knock'd down,
Last night, here, in the forest, flat and sprawling ;
And the milk-hearted captain of our gang
Has shelter'd him.

Mort. It seems, then, thou'rt a thief.

Ors. I served in the profession : but, last night,
The scurvy rogues cashier'd me. 'Twas a plot,
To ruin a poor fellow in his calling,
And take away my means of getting bread.
I come, now, in revenge. I'll hang my comrades,
In clusters, on the forest's oaks, like acorns.

Mort. Where lies their haunt ?

Ors. Give me your honour, first.

Mort. I pledge it, for your safety.

Ors. Send your officers

To the old abbey ruins; you will find
As bold a gang as e'er infested woods,
And fatten'd upon pillage.

Mort. What, so near me!

In some few minutes, then, he's mine! Ho! Winterton!

Now for his lurking place! Hope dawns again.
Remain you here! I may have work for you.

[*To ORSON.*

O! I will weave a web so intricate
For this base insect! so entangle him! —
Why, Winterton! — Thou jewel, Reputation!
Let me secure thee, bright and spotless, now,
And this weak, care-worn body's dissolution,
Will cheaply pay the purchase! Winterton!

[*Exit.*

Ors. There may be danger in my stay here. I
will e'en slink off, in the confusion I have raised.
I value not reward. I hang my comrades, and that
shall content me.

[*Exit.*

A Hall in the Lodge.

Enter FITZHARDING.

Fitz. Rare scuttling tow'rd! This lodge is little
Babel:

And Spleen and Sickness are the household-gods,
In this, my brother's, castle of confusion.
The hue and cry is up! I am half tempted
To wish the game too nimble for the dogs,
That hunt him at the heels. Dishonest! Well,
I'll ne'er trust looks again: His face hangs out
A goodly sign; but all within, it seems,
Is dirty rooms, stale eggs, prick'd wine, sour beer,
Rank bacon, musty beef, and tallow-candles.
I'll be deceived no more. — I'll mix with none,
In future, but the ugly, honest men,

Who can out-grin a griffin ; or the head
Carved on the prow of the good ship, the Gorgon.
I'm for carbuncled, weather-beaten faces,
That frighten little children, and might serve
For knockers to hall-gates. — Now ; — who are
you ?

Enter SAMSON.

Sam. Head serving-man to Madam Helen, sir.

Fitz. Well, I may talk to thee ; for thou dost
answer

To the description of the sort of men
I have resolved to live with.

Sam. I am proud, sir,

To find I have your countenance

Fitz. Can'st tell me

The news of Wilford.

Sam. He is turn'd a rogue, sir,

An errant knave, sir. 'Tis a rare thing, now,

To find an honest servant : — We are scarce.

Fitz. Where lies the Abbey, where they go to
seek him ?

Dost know it ?

Sam. Marry, do I ; in the dark.

I have stood near it, many a time, in winter,

To watch the hares, by moonlight.

Fitz. A cold pastime !

Sam. Aye, sir, 'twas killing work. I've left it
off.

Fitz. Think you they will be back soon ?

Sam. On the instant :

It is hard by, sir. — Hark ! I hear their horses.

They are return'd, I warrant.

Fitz. Run you, fellow ; —

If Wilford's taken, send him here, to me.

Sam. Why he's a rogue, sir. Would your wor-
ship stoop

To parley with a rogue ?

Fitz. Friend, I will stoop
To prop a sinking man, that's call'd a rogue,
And count him innocent, till he's found guilty.
I learn'd it from our English laws, where Mercy
Models the weights that fill the scales of Justice;
And Charity, when Wisdom gives her sentence,
Stands by to prompt her. 'Till detection comes,
I side with the accused.

Sam. Would I had known
Your worship sooner. You're a friend, indeed!
All undiscover'd rogues are bound to pray for
you:
— So, Heaven bless you!

Fitz. Well, well — bustle; stir: —
Do as I bid thee.

Sam. Aye, sir. — I shall lean
Upon your worship in my time of need.
Heaven reward you! — Here's a friend to make!

[*Exit.*

Fitz. I have a kind of movement, still, for Wil-
ford,

I cannot conquer. What can be this charge
Sir Edward brings against him? — Should the boy
Prove guilty! — Well; why should I pity guilt?
Philosophers would call me driveller. — Let them.
Whip a deserter, and Philosophy
Stands by, and says he merits it. That's true: —
But wherefore should Philosophy take snuff,
When the poor culprit writhes? A plague on
Stoics!

I cannot hoop my heart about with iron,
Like an old beer-butt. I would have the vessel
What some call weak: — I'd have it ooze a little.
Better compassion should be set abroad,
'Till it run waste, than let a system-monger
Bung it with logic; or a trencher-cap
Bawl out his ethics on it, 'till his thunder
Turns all the liquor sour. — So! Here he comes.

Enter WILFORD.

Wilf. I am inform'd it is your pleasure, sir,
To speak with me.

Fitz. Aye, Wilford. I am sorry —
Faith, very sorry, — you and I meet thus.
How could you quit my brother thus abruptly?
Was he unkind to you?

Wilf. Most bountiful.
He made me all I am. The poor can number
His virtues thick as stars. I owe him, sir,
A world of gratitude.

Fitz. 'Tis a new mode
Of payment you have taken. Wherefore fly?

Wilf. I was unfit to serve him, sir.

Fitz. Unfit!

Wilf. I was unhappy, sir. I fled a house
Where certain misery awaited me,
While I was doom'd to dwell in't.

Fitz. Misery!
What was this certain misery?

Wilf. Your pardon, —
I never will divulge.

Fitz. Indeed!

Wilf. No, never.
Pray do not press me. All that I can say
Is, that I have a strong and rooted reason,
Which has resolved me. 'Twere impossible
I should be tranquil here. I feel it, sir,
A duty to myself to quit this roof.

Fitz. Hark ye, young man. This smacks of
mystery;
And now looks foully. Truth and innocence
Walk round the world in native nakedness;
But guilt is cloak'd.

Wilf. Whate'er the prejudice
My conduct conjures up, I must submit.

Fitz. 'Twere better now you conjured up your friends :

For I must tell you — No, there is no need.
You learn'd it, doubtless, on the way, and know
The danger you now stand in.

Wilf. Danger, sir !

What ! How ? I have learn'd nothing, sir ; my
guides

Dragg'd me in silence hither.

Fitz. Then 'tis fit

I put you on your guard. It grieves me, Wilford,
To say there is a heavy charge against you,
Which, as I gather, may affect your life.

Wilf. Mine ! — O, good Heaven !

Fitz. Pray be calm : — for, soon,
Here, in the face of all his family,
My brother will accuse you.

Wilf. He ! — What, he !

He accuse *me* ! O monstrous ! O, look down
You who can read men's hearts ! — A charge
against me !

Ha, ha ! I'm innocent ! I'm innocent.

[*Much agitated.*]

Fitz. Collect your firmness. You will need it all.

Wilf. I shall, indeed ! I pray you, tell me, sir,
What is the charge ?

Fitz. I do not know its purport.

I would not hear on't : for on my voice rests
The issue of this business ; — and a judge
Should come unbiass'd to his office. Wilford,
Were twenty brothers waiting my award,
You should have even and impartial justice.

Wilf. O, *you* are just ! I would all men were so !

Fitz. I hope most men are so. Rally your
thoughts.

When you are call'd upon, if truth will serve you,
Sketch out your story with her chaste, bold pencil :
If truth should fail you, Wilford, even take

The fairest colours human art can mix,
To give a glow to plausibility.

'Tis self-defence ; and 'tis allowed, when man
Must battle it, with all the world against him.

— Heaven bless you, boy ! — that is, I mean —
pshaw ! plague !

— Farewell ! and may you prosper. [Exit.]

Wilf. Then, all my youthful hopes are blighted
in the bud ! the breath of my powerful persecutor
will wither them. Let me recall my actions. —
My breast is unclogg'd with crime. This charge is
to be open ; — in the eye of the world ; of the laws.
— Then, why should I fear ? I am native of a happy
soil, where justice guards, equally, the life of its
poorest and richest inhabitant. Let him inflict his
menaces upon me, in secret ; let him torture my
mind and body ; he shall not, cannot, touch my
good name.

Enter BARBARA.

Barb. O, Wilford ! [Falls on his neck.]

Wilf. Barbara ! at such a time, too !

Barb. To be brought back, thus, Wilford ! and
to go away without seeing me ; without thinking of
me !

Wilf. It was not so. — I was hastening to your
cottage, Barbara, when a ruffian in the forest en-
counter'd and wounded me.

Barb. Wounded you !

Wilf. Be not alarm'd. 'Tis not, as I thought
yesternight, of moment. One of his party took me
to the Abbey ruins, and gave me timely succour.

Barb. And was it so ! was it indeed so, Wilford ?

Wilf. Aye, Barbara. When I was dragg'd hither,
the whole troop escaped, or they had vouch'd for
the truth on't.

Barb. I would they had not escaped. For all here say that you had fled to join them.

Wilf. What! join with robbers! what next shall I be charged with?

Barb. Bethink you, Wilford — the time is short: I know your heart is good; but —

Wilf. But what? Can you suspect it, too, Barbara!

Barb. O! mine is so link'd with it, that I would follow you through beggary, through prisons, Wilford.

Wilf. Prisons! The sound, now, makes me shudder!

Barb. If in a hasty moment you have done aught to wrong Sir Edward, throw yourself on his mercy; — sue for pardon.

Wilf. For pardon! — I shall go mad! Pardon! I am innocent. — Heaven knows I am innocent.

Barb. Heaven be thanked. — The family is all summon'd. O, Wilford! my spirits sink within me.

Wilf. [*Aside.*] I am, now, but a sorry comforter. — Come, Barbara, be tranquil. You see I am so. Don't — don't you, Barbara!

[*Agitated.*]

Enter a SERVANT.

Serv. You must attend in the next room.

Wilf. What, Walter, is it you? Pray tell me if —

Serv. Do not question me. I hold no discourse with any of your stamp.

Wilf. Your tone is strangely changed on the sudden. What have I done?

Serv. You are going to be tried. That's enough for me.

Wilf. I might rather claim your pity on that score, Walter.

Serv. What, pity a man that's going to be tried? O, monstrous!

Wilf. Well, fare you well. I will not upbraid you, Walter. You have many in the world to countenance you. Blacken well your neighbour, and nine in ten are in haste to cry shame upon him, ere he has time, or opportunity, to wipe off the accusation. I follow you.

Serv. Do so.

Barb. O, Wilford!

Wilf. Be of good cheer. I go arm'd in honesty, Barbara. I can bear every thing:—every thing, save making you the partner of my misfortunes. That, Barbara——I am sure you love me——That would give me a pang which would——Farewell! [Exit.

Barb. Alas! I tremble for his safety!—should they tear him from me! ———

SONG. — BARBARA.

*Down by the river there grows a green willow;
Sing all for my true love! my true love, O!
I'll weep out the night there, the bank for my pillow
And all for my true love, my true love, O!
When bleak blows the wind, and tempests are beating,
I'll count all the clouds, as I mark them retreating,
For true lovers' joys, well a day! are as fleeting.*

*Sing, O for my true love, &c.
Maids come, in pity, when I am departed!
Sing all for my true love, &c.
When dead, on the bank, I am found broken hearted,
And all for my true love, &c.
Make me a grave, all while the wind's blowing,
Close to the stream, where my tears once were flowing;
And over my corse keep the green willow growing,
'Tis all for my true love, &c.* [Exit.

SCENE III.

An Apartment in the Lodge.

FITZHARDING, WILFORD, and various domestics discovered. — To them enter ADAM WINTERTON.

Fitz. Is not Sir Edward coming, Adam?

Wint. Aye, sir; —

But he is grievous ill. — Since Wilford came,
He had another fit. — But he'll be here.

Ah, boy! that I should live to see this day!

I have a merry heart no longer now.

Wilf. Good man! you have been ever kind to me.

Wint. Heaven send you may prove honest!
Heaven send it!

— Here comes Sir Edward. Would that I had died

Two reigns ago!

Enter Sir EDWARD MORTIMER.

Fitz. Now, brother. — You look pale,
And faint with sickness.

Wint. Here's a chair, your worship.

Mort. No matter. — To our business, brother
Wilford,

You may well guess the struggle I endure
To place you here the mark of accusation.

I gave you ample warning: caution'd you,
When many might have scourged: and, even now,
While I stand here to crush you, — aye, to crush
you, —

My heart bleeds drops of pity for your youth,
Whose rashness plucks the red destruction down,
And pulls the bolt upon you.

Wilf. You know best

The movements of your heart, sir. Man is blind,
And cannot read them; but there is a Judge,

To whose all-seeing eye our inmost thoughts
Lie open. Think to Him you now appeal.
Omniscience keeps Heaven's register;
And, soon or late, when Time unfolds the book
Our trembling souls must answer to the record,
And meet their due reward, or punishment.

Fitz. Now to the point, I pray you.

Mort. Thus it is, then.

I do suspect — By Heaven the story lingers,
Like poison, on my tongue — but he will force it —

Fitz. What is it you suspect?

Mort. — That he has robbed me.

Wilf. Robb'd! I! O, horrible!

Fitz. Not yet — not yet.

Pray tell me, brother — I will be impartial; —
But I am somewhat moved. — Pray tell me, brother,
How ground you this suspicion?

Mort. Briefly, thus. —

You may have noticed, in my library,
A chest [*WILFORD starts*] — You see he changes
at the word.

Wilf. And well I may!

[*Aside.*

Mort. Where I have told you, brother,
The writings which concern our family,
With jewels, cash, and other articles,
Of no mean value were deposited.

Fitz. You oftentimes have said so.

Mort. Yesterday,
Chance call'd me, suddenly, away; I left
The key in't — but as suddenly return'd;
And found this Wilford, this young man, whose
state,
Whose orphan state, met pity in my house,
'Till pity grew to friendship, — him I found,
Fix'd o'er the chest, upon his knees, intent,
As now I think, on plunder; tinging theft
Still blacker with ingratitude; and rifling
The easy fool who shelter'd him. Confusion

Shook his young joints, as he let fall the lid,
And gave me back the key.

Fitz. Did you not search
Your papers on the instant?

Mort. No : — for, first,
(Habit so long had fix'd my confidence,)
I deem'd it boyish curiosity ; —
But told him this would meet my further question :
And, at that moment, came a servant in,
To say you were arrived. He must have mark'd
Our mix'd emotion.

Fitz. Is that servant here ?

Serv. 'Twas I, sir.

Mort. Was it you ? Well, saw you aught
To challenge your attention ?

Serv. Sir, I did.

Wilford was pale, and trembling ; and our master
Gave him a look as if 'twould pierce him through,
And cried, " Remember !" — Then he trembled
more,

And we both quitted him.

Mort. When first we met,
You found me somewhat ruffled.

Fitz. 'Tis most true.

Mort. But somewhat more when, afterwards, I
saw

Wilford conversing with you ; — like a snake,
Sunn'd by your looks, and basking in your favour
I bade him quit the room, with indignation,
And wait my coming in the library.

Fitz. I witness'd that, with wonder.

Mort. O, good brother !

You little thought, while you so gently school'd me,
In the full flow of your benevolence,
For my harsh bearing tow'rd him, on what ground
That harshness rested. I had made my search,
In the brief interval of absence from you,
And found my property had vanish'd.

Fitz. Well ——

You met him in the library?

Mort. O never

Can he forget that solemn interview.

Wilf. Aye, speak to that: — it *was* a solemn interview.

Mort. Observe, he does acknowledge that we met. Guilt was my theme: — he cannot, now, deny it.

Wilf. It was a theme of — No.

[*Checking himself.*]

Mort. He pleaded innocence:

While every word he spake belied his features,
And mock'd his protestation. I restrain'd
The chastisement he fear'd; nor would I blazon
The wrong I could not fix; and subject, thus
By general inquiry, all the guiltless
To foul suspicion. That suspicion lay
Most heavily on him; but the big cloud
Of anger he had gather'd burst not on him,
In vengeance, to o'erwhelm him: chill it dropp'd,
But kindly, as the dew, in admonition;
Like tears of fathers o'er a wayward child,
When love enforces them to ruggedness.

Fitz. What said you to him?

Mort. "Regulate your life,

"In future, better. I now spare your youth;
"But dare not to proceed. All I exact,
"('Tis a soft penance) — that you tarry here;
"My eye your guard, my house your gentle prison,
"My bounty be your chains. Attempt not flight;
"Flight ripens all my doubt to certainty,
"And justice to the world unlocks my tongue." —
He fled, and I arraign him.

Fitz. Trust me, brother,

This charge is staggering. Yet accidents,
Sometimes, combine to cast a shade of doubt
Upon the innocent. May it be so here!
Here is his trunk: 'twas brought here at my order.
'Tis fit that it be searched.

Mort. O, that were needless.
He were a shallow villain that would trust
His freight of plunder to so frail a bottom.
School-boys, who strip the orchard of its fruit,
Conceal their thievery better.

Fitz. Yet 'tis found
Such negligence is often link'd with guilt.
Take note — I say not yet that he is guilty ;
But I scarce heard of crafty villain, yet,
Who did not make some blot in his foul game,
That lookers-on have thought him blind, and mad,
It was so palpable. — 'Tis rarely otherwise :
Heaven's hand is in it, brother : Providence
Marks guilt, as 'twere, with a fatuity. —
Adam, do you inspect it ?

Wilf. Here's the key ;
E'en take it, freely. — You'll find little there
I value ; save a locket, which my mother
Gave me upon her death-bed ; and she added
Her blessing to't. Perhaps, her spirit now
Is grieving for my injuries.

Wint. [*After opening the trunk*] O, mercy !

Fitz. How now ? What's there ?

Wint. As I'm a wretched man,
The very watch my good old master wore !
And, here, my lady's jewels !

Wilf. I am innocent.
Just Heaven hear me !

Fitz. I must hear you, now.
What can you say ? — Oh ! Wilford.

Wilf. Give me breath.
Let me collect myself. First this. [*Falls on his
knees.*]

May sleep
Ne'er close my burning eyes ; may conscience gnaw
me ;
May engines wrench my entrails from their seat ;

And whirl them to the winds before my face,
If I know aught of this!

Fitz. Make it appear so. — But look there! look there!
[*Pointing to the trunk.*]

Wilf. Heap circumstance upon me; multiply
Charge upon charge; pile seeming fact on fact;
Still I maintain my innocence. Look at me;
Are these the throes of guilt? Are these convul-
sions

Of a poor, helpless, friendless, wretched boy,
The struggles of a villain? — One thing more:
I here aver it — to his face aver it —
He knows — Yes, he — Yes, my accuser knows,
I merit not his charge.

[*A general expression of indignation.*]

Wint. O! fie on't, fie!

Fitz. Wilford, take heed! A base attempt to
blacken

An injured master, will but plunge you deeper.

Wilf. I know what I am doing. I repeat it:
Will die repeating it. Sir Edward Mortimer
Is conscious of my innocence.

Mort. Proceed —

Look at these proofs, and talk. — Unhappy boy,
Thy tongue can do me little mischief, now.

Wilf. Do you not know —

Mort. What?

Wilf. — 'Tis no matter, sir.

But I could swear —

Mort. Nay, Wilford, pause a while.
Reflect that oaths are sacred. Weigh the force
Of these asseverations. Mark it well.

*I swear, by all the ties that bind a man,
Divine or human! Think on that, and shudder.*

Wilf. The very words I utter'd! I am tongue-
tied. [Aside]

Fitz. Wilford, if there be aught that you can urge,
To clear yourself, advance it.

Wilf. O, I could!

I could say much, but must not. — No, I will not.
Do as you please. — I have no friend — no witness,
Save my accuser. Did he not — pray ask him —
Did he not vaunt his wiles could ruin me?
Did he not menace, in his pride of power,
To blast my name and crush my innocence?

Fitz. What do you answer, sir?

Mort. I answer — No. —

More were superfluous, when a criminal
Opposes empty volubility
To circumstantial charge. A stedfast brow
Repels not fact, nor can invalidate
These dumb, but damning, witnesses, before him.
[*Pointing to the trunk.*]

Wilf. By the just pow'r that rules us, I am
ignorant

How they came there! — but, 'tis my firm belief,
You placed them there to sink me.

Fitz. O, too much!

You steel men's hearts against you! Death and
shame!

It rouses honest choler. Call the officers. —

He shall meet punishment. [*Servants going.*]

Mort. Hold! pray you, hold.

Justice has, thus far, struggled with my pity
To do an act of duty to the world.

I would unmask a hypocrite; lay bare

The front of guilt, that men may see, and shun it:

'Tis done, and I will now proceed no further.

I would not hurt the serpent, but to make

The serpent hurtless. He has lost his sting;

Let him depart, and freely.

Fitz. Look ye, brother;

This shall not be. — Had he proved innocent,

My friendship had been doubled; you well know

I have been partial to him; — but this act

Is so begrimed with black, ungrateful malice,

That I insist on justice. Fly, knaves! run,
And let him be secured. [*Exeunt servants.*] You
tarry here. [*To WILFORD.*

Mort. I will not have it thus.

Fitz. You must — You shall —

'Tis weak else. Oons! I trust I have as much
Of good, straight-forward pity as may serve;
But to turn dove — to sit still and be peck'd at,
It is too tame. His insolence tops all!
Does not this rouse you, too? — Look on these
jewels; —

Look at this picture; — 'twas our mother's: Stay,
Let me inspect this nearer. What are here?

Parchments — [*Inspecting the trunk.*

Mort. O, look no further — They are deeds,
Which, in his haste, no doubt, he crowded there,
Not knowing what — to look o'er at his leisure. —
Family deeds — They all were in my chest.

Wilf. O, 'tis deep laid! — These, too, to give a
colour! [*Aside.*

Fitz. What have we here? I have your leave,
good brother,

As arbiter in this. Here is a paper
Of curious enfolding; — slipt, as 'twere,
By chance, within another. This may be
Of note upon his trial. — What's this drops?
A knife, it seems!

Mort. What! [*Starting.*

Fitz. Marks of blood upon it!

Mort. Touch it not. Throw it back! — bury it
— sink it!

Oh, carelessness and haste! Give me that paper.
Darkness and hell! Give back the paper.

[*MORTIMER attempts to snatch it; WILFORD runs
between the two brothers, falls on his knees,
and prevents him, holding* FITZHARDING.

Wilf. [*Rapidly.*] No.

I see! — I see! — Preserve it. You are judge!
My innocence, my life, rests on it!

Mort. Devils!

Foil me at my own game! — Fate! — Ha, ha, ha!
Sport, Lucifer! — He struck me —

[*MORTIMER is fainting and falling; WILFORD runs and catches him.*

Wilf. I'll support him. —

Read! read! read!

Fitz. What is this? — My mind misgives me!
It is my brother's hand! — “*To be destroy'd before death!*”

What can this mean? — [Reads.
Narrative of my murder of — Oh, great Heav'n!

“If, ere I die, my guilt should be disclosed,

“May this contribute to redeem the wreck

“Of my lost honour!” — I am horror-struck!

Wilf. Plain, plain! — Stay! he revives.

Mort. What has been — soft;

I have been wand'ring with the damn'd, sure. —
Brother! —

And — aye — 'tis Wilford. Oh! thought flashes
on me,

Like lightning. I am brain-scorch'd. Give me leave,

I will speak — Soon I will — a little yet —

Come hither, boy. — Wrong'd boy! O Wilford,
Wilford!

[*Bursts into tears, and falls on WILFORD's neck.*

Wilf. Be firm, sir; pray be firm! my heart bleeds
for you —

Warm's for you! Oh! all your former charity

To your poor boy is in my mind. — Still, still,

I see my benefactor.

Mort. Well, I will —

I will be firm. One struggle, and 'tis over.

I have most foully wrong'd you! . Ere I die —

And I feel death-struck — let me haste to make

Atonement. — Brother, note. The jewels,

Yes, and that paper — Heaven and accident
Ordain'd it so! — were placed — Curse on my flesh,
To tremble thus! — were placed there by my hand.

Fitz. O, mercy on me!

Mort. More. I fear'd this boy;
He knew my secret; and I blacken'd him,
That, should he e'er divulge the fatal story,
His word might meet no credit. Infamy
Will brand my mem'ry for't: Posterity,
Whose breath I made my god, will keep my shame
Green in her damning record. Oh! I had —
I had a heart o'erflowing with good thoughts
For all mankind! One fatal, fatal turn,
Has poison'd all! Where is my honour, now?
To die! — To have my ashes trampled on,
By the proud foot of scorn! Polluted! Hell —
Who dares to mock my guilt? Is't you — or you?
Wrack me that grinning fiend! Damnation!
Who spits upon my grave? I'll stab again —
I'll — Oh!

[*Falls.*]

Fitz. This rives my heart in twain. Why, brother,
brother!

His looks are ghastly.

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Sir, the officers.

Fitz. Away, knave! Send them hence; the boy
is innocent.

Serv. What, Wilford?

Fitz. Aye. Tell it your fellows. Hence!
You shall know more, anon. Send in some help;
Your master's ill o' the sudden. Send some help!

[*Exit Servant.*]

Wilf. 'Twere best to raise him, sir?

Fitz. Soft, who comes here?

Enter HELEN.

Helen. Where is he? Ill! and on the ground!

Oh, Mortimer!

Oh, Heaven! my Mortimer. O, raise him. —
Gently.

Speak to me, love. He cannot!

Mort. Helen — 'Twas I that —

[He struggles to speak, but appears unable to utter.]

Helen. Oh, he's convulsed!

Fitz. Say nothing. We must lead him to his chamber.

Beseech you to say nothing! Come, good lady!

[FITZHARDING and HELEN lead MORTIMER out.]

Enter BARBARA, on the opposite side.

Barb. O, Wilford! I have flown to you! You are innocent. — The whole house now has it, you are innocent. Thank Heaven! Speak! tell me — How — how was it, dear, dear Wilford?

Wilf. I cannot tell you now, Barbara. Another time: but it is so. — I cannot speak, now.

Barb. Nor I, scarce, for joy. See! hither come your fellows, to greet you. I am so happy!

Enter SERVANTS, &c. &c. &c.

Servants. Joy, Wilford.

Wilf. Peace, peace, I pray you. Our master is taken ill: so ill, my fellows, that I fear me, he stands in much danger. That you rejoice in my acquittal, I perceive, and thank you. Sir Edward's brother will explain further to you: I cannot. But believe this: — Heaven, to whose eye the dark movements of guilt are manifest, will ever watch over and

succour the innocent in their extremity. Clamour not now your congratulations to me, I entreat you: rather let the slow still voice of gratitude be lifted up to Providence, for that care she ever bestows upon those deserving her protection!

FINALE.

*Where Gratitude shall breathe the note,
To white-robed mercy's throne,
Bid the mild strain on ether float,
A soft and dulcet tone.*

*Sweet, sweet, and clear the accents raise,
While mellow flutes shall swell the song of praise.
Melody! Melody!
A soft and dulcet melody!*

*Where fever droops his burning head;
Where sick men languish on their bed;
Around let every accent be,
Harmony! Harmony!
A soft and dulcet harmony!*

FINIS.

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